



STATE priority issues

STATE BUDGET

Ohio Farm Bureau Federation (OFBF) applauds Gov. John Kasich and the General Assembly for solving the state budget shortfall in the previous General Assembly. As Ohio moves forward this year with the state's two-year biennium budget, OFBF will support appropriate funding for the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA); the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR); Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agriculture Research & Development Center; soil & water conservation districts, and career tech education, specifically ag education. Policy makers need to consider the public health and safety concerns when budgeting for ODA specifically in the area of food safety.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

OFBF is helping to lead an unprecedented effort by Ohio agriculture to proactively solve the challenge of nutrient runoff and the impact of harmful algal blooms to Ohio's waters. While OFBF supports continued research to learn the best practices to retain fertilizer within a field's boundary, OFBF recognizes the public, lawmakers, and regulators won't wait for years of research. For this reason,

OFBF is proactively encouraging voluntary solutions that will allow Ohio farmers to document a reduction in nutrient runoff through the use of the principles of "4R Nutrient Stewardship." Additionally, OFBF is committed to working with ODA, ODNR, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, other agriculture groups and the industry to make sure any policies and regulations adopted are well informed, appropriate and effective in reducing agricultural runoff.

AGRICULTURE EDUCATION, RURAL SCHOOLS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Agriculture remains Ohio's No. 1 industry, but to ensure Ohio remains a leader in the agriculture industry, employers need a skilled and reliable workforce. Many jobs in the agriculture sector are highly skilled and require specialized training, the kind of training students are receiving today in career tech and agricultural education programs. As the governor and the legislature revisit school funding, special consideration should be given to ag education and career tech funding, specifically the three major components of ag education: 1) classroom and lab learning, 2) supervised agricultural experiences (SAEs), and 3) FFA. STEM schools with an agbioresource focus must also be considered.

In regard to an overall change in the school funding formula, OFBF supports a decrease in the proportion of revenue from property taxes and a corresponding increase in revenue from other sources. OFBF also encourages the majority of funds to go toward in-classroom needs as opposed to increased administrative costs. Rural students

should be assured the same opportunities and benefits offered to their urban and suburban counterparts.

BUSINESS CLIMATE

A sound business climate, a low tax burden, a just legal system, and reasonable labor laws will create and retain Ohio jobs and grow the state's economy. OFBF supports a comprehensive review of Ohio's overall tax policy and a review of the tax burden on citizens and businesses as compared to other states. Maintaining a strong CAUV

program, clarifying Ohio's sales tax exemption, and continuing to look for cost savings as opposed to tax increases will help keep Ohio farms strong.

Additionally, Ohio's agricultural community needs a good system of transportation to remain competitive in today's economy. The state's highway, water, rail and air systems should be further used to support and grow Ohio's agbio-resource industry.

As the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act enters its fourth year of implementation, significant changes in the accessibility and delivery of health care are taking place. As members navigate these complex changes, OFBF will work to educate them on options available as both families and employers.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY

A variety of energy sources need to be employed to address demands for fuel and power. OFBF will provide leadership in the development of a comprehensive state energy policy that incorporates use of coal, nuclear, natural gas, petroleum and competitive renewable technologies. Local communities need resources to address economic, logistic, social and service issues as large energy development projects move forward. Collaborative efforts should be enhanced to ensure, repair and remediate farmland and public infrastructure after energy development projects are completed.

