



Identifying Trends in Ohio's Political Landscape

Defining the Issue

Ohio is seen as a premier "battleground state" in American politics. Many political observers credit the state's diversity – a mixture of geographic regions, rural and urban communities, economic drivers, media markets and community histories – as key elements of its unique political character. Ohio is a microcosm of the country.

Politics change over time. Some trends and issues develop over decades, while other prevailing opinions and viewpoints change and advance quickly.

What are some of the political trends and issues impacting elections and politics in your neighborhood? What community viewpoints do you see as foundational, and what ideas and concerns do you see influencing change in local, state and national affairs? How would your community council define Ohio's political landscape?

AFBF Policy – Elections

The federal government should not be involved directly in the elective process in any way, but should recommend certain uniform guidelines to the states to assure fair and proper elections.

We support:

- A national effort to require registered voters to show photo identification when reporting to the polling place to receive a ballot;
- Voters being required to register in person a minimum of 30 days prior to the election;
- Proof of citizenship being a prerequisite for voter registration;
- Voter registration being recorded rapidly to reduce duplicate registrations;
- Repeal of laws mandating use of multilingual ballots in public elections because a common language is essential to a unified country;
- Retention of the Electoral College for presidential elections and electors being required to vote for the candidates to which they were pledged;
- The use of leadership Political Action Committees (PACs) under federal election law;
- Changing the present election laws to limit compulsory union dues or any other compulsory mechanism, from being used in any way to influence federal or state elections;
- Efforts to further consolidate elections in order to streamline the system and reduce taxpayers' expense; and
- The ability to include auto political phone calls in the do-not-call list for individuals.

We oppose:

- Proposals to make the popular vote the sole determinant of presidential elections;
- Changes that restrict or curtail the right of an individual citizen, or any group of citizens, the right to express themselves as guaranteed by the First Amendment;
- The use of public funds and franking privileges in the financing of political campaigns;
- Government support, grants or other funding of organizations for political activity;

- The use of the Internet for voting in any local, state, or federal election; and
- The news media reporting election results and exit poll results prior to the closing of all polling places.

OFBF Policy – Campaigns and Elections

We support full disclosure of all campaign contributions and the enforcement of existing campaign finance laws and encourage the examination of further campaign finance reform.

We oppose contributions to political campaigns from foreign interests.

Farmers should become better informed and seek elected office or become actively involved in politics and government at the local, state and national levels. Many candidates for public office and many issues on the ballot are deserving of farmers' financial support.

The Agriculture for Good Government Political Action Committee (AGGPAC) must rely on individual members for contributions since organization funds cannot legally be used. More funds should be generated to support or oppose issues on the ballot and to make contributions to deserving candidates who support Farm Bureau policy.

The Ohio Farm Bureau should: 1.) Operate AGGPAC on a bi-partisan basis; 2.) Encourage the members to participate as individuals in political party activities and serve in various capacities of the political party structure. More farmer involvement in our political parties is seriously needed to strengthen and keep the parties responsive to the best interest of agriculture and rural communities; 3.) Provide convenient opportunities for members to voluntarily contribute to AGGPAC; 4.) Encourage member Farm Bureaus to promote or provide activities which inform members of political issues, candidates and public officials and to recruit viable candidates to run for office; 5.) Provide profiles of statewide candidates and issues; 6.) Take a more aggressive role in recruiting and assisting candidates that are friendly to agriculture because of the effects of term limits; 7.) Encourage Farm Bureau members to take advantage of the credit against state income tax for contributions to candidates for state political office and 8.) Work with AFBF to create a process that considers more than just an incumbents' voting record when determining the AFBF designation of Friend of Farm Bureau.

Discussion Questions

1. What factors do you see as *politics as usual*, and what trends are *changing the political landscape* of your neighborhood? How are these developments related to issues in state and national affairs?
2. What is the most pressing election related issue in your community? What needs to be fixed and what suggestions do you have that could help address the issue?
3. Getting a community leader prepared to run for public office takes considerable interest in public service, practical experience, encouragement from peers and financial resources. To what extent should your county Farm Bureau be involved in recruiting and supporting candidates for public office?
4. How many of your Community Council members participate in county Farm Bureau political education, policy development and/or issues briefings with government officials? Who from your group would be interested in participating in these grass roots activities?