

2013 Ohio Farmers Union Special Orders of Business

**As Approved by Convention Delegates
January 26, 2013**

The Ohio Turnpike

The Ohio Farmers Union is generally supportive of Gov. John Kasich's current plan to raise funds for Ohio roads through a bonding plan backed by tolls levied on the Ohio Turnpike. We urge the Governor and Ohio General Assembly to pay careful attention to two details in the plan. First, we urge the definition of "Northern Ohio" for purposes of where Turnpike revenue and Turnpike bond revenue are spent, be established as territory north of U.S. 224. Second, we urge the Ohio General Assembly to codify Kasich Administration statements that "virtually all" or "more than 90 percent" of Turnpike bond revenue – expected to be at least \$1.5 billion – will be spent in northern Ohio. We see no reason not to specify 100% of bond and Turnpike revenue be spent in northern Ohio in legislation enabling the Governor's plan.

Ohio Grain Indemnity Program

Also known as the "Ohio Grain Indemnity Fund" – The Ohio Farmers Union strongly supports the Ohio Department of Agriculture's current initiative to update the relevant portion of the Ohio Revised Code which authorizes and sets the operational parameters for the Indemnity Fund. The Ohio Farmers Union calls upon ODA and the Ohio General Assembly to make the changes to the O.R.C. proposed by ODA staff at the December 2011 meeting of the Indemnity Fund's overseers and subsequently unanimously passed by the Ohio Agricultural Commodity Advisory Commission. We urge the Governor to sign legislation containing these changes. This is a time sensitive matter for Ohio agriculture, as the trigger which initiates producer contributions to the fund will be soon met. Ohio's farmers should know they are re-building the fund to a level which better reflects today's market conditions. Ohio and its family farmers must be assured that the priority lien language remain the centerpiece of the legislation

25% of Ohio's Energy Should Be Produced from Renewable Resources by 2025 and Energy Efficiency Standards

With the passage and signing of 127-S.B. 221, Ohio energy policy has been that 25% of all electrical generation for the state will be from renewable energy resources by the year 2025. The Ohio Farmers Union continues to strongly support this mandate, which is current law, and is opposed to any utility or coal industry efforts to repeal or weaken this mandate.

The Ohio Farmers Union opposes attempts by First Energy to repeal current law mandating energy efficiency measures by Ohio's public utilities.

Federal and State Legislative Apportionment (Redistricting) in Ohio

The Ohio Farmers Union supports efforts to reform the reapportionment process in Ohio. District maps for federal and state legislative offices as currently constituted destroy competition, divide communities and give one political party an unfair advantage over the other.

Ohio Severance Tax

The Ohio Farmers Union is supportive of efforts to increase severance taxes in Ohio. The Ohio Farmers Union does not support using 100 percent of the revenue from increased severance taxes to cut income taxes for all Ohioans. A portion of severance tax revenue should be set aside for environmental mitigation of the effects of hydraulic fracturing. Furthermore, a generous portion of severance tax collections should remain in the county where they were made for the purposes of public education and infrastructure improvements such as roads and bridges which will be negatively impacted by increased industrial traffic due to drilling operations. Finally, the Ohio Farmers Union supports adding Natural Gas Liquids to the list of items that fall under hydraulic fracturing severance taxes.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Fracking Effects Study

Ohio farmers need clean water for livestock and irrigation. When deciding whether to lease mineral rights, farmers need to have all the possible information to make the best decisions for their families, farms and communities. The Ohio Farmers Union is alarmed at the possibility that the final EPA study on fracking may not include data on the potential well water contamination by the fracking process. Due to the critical importance of clean water to farming, Ohio Farmers Union asks that this data be addressed in the EPA final report.

Support for Local Food Advisory Councils in Ohio

In 2008 Ohioans spent \$35 billion on food - only about 1% of that stayed in Ohio (ODA). By localizing food spending, Ohio can create wealth and new job opportunities. Encouraging the growth of local food marketed in Ohio can increase income to farmers and make job opportunities in farming more attractive. A growing local food sector can also slow the conversion of farmland, thereby protecting valuable farmland and water resources. Localizing food spending has many other benefits, including providing fresh high quality food to Ohioans. In order for this localized marketing to happen, there must be deliberate decisions made by the private and public sectors. One of the ways this has happened in Ohio is through the work of the Local Food Advisory Councils.

Ohio Farmers Union supports the work of the Local Food Advisory Councils and will cooperate with them to further our mutual interests.

National Cattlemen's Beef Board Check-Off

The Ohio Farmers Union asks the Office of the Inspector General of the United States Department of Agriculture come forth with their long overdue results of the audit of the National Cattlemen's Beef Board Check-Off.

Nutrient Pollution

OFU supports broad focus on reducing nutrient pollution from farms and cities alike.

We urge all farmers to adopt voluntary conservation practices, including the 4Rs.

We urge increased oversight of Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) and Third party manure distributors, called Certified Livestock Managers (CLMs).

We congratulate the ODNR for undertaking the administration of the Watersheds In Distress program, for watersheds severely degraded by Ag nutrients.

We urge congress to adopt Farm Bill language that requires conservation compliance for farmers using subsidized crop insurance and urge adequate funding for voluntary conservation practices such as cover crops and filter strips. Programs such as EQIP and CRP must be available and funded sufficiently to make practices such as filter strips for sediment control attractive to farmers.

We urge The USEPA to approve a protective nutrient standard for Ohio

We support the use of nutrient trading programs, which include rigorous monitoring and verification programs.

Statement on Gun Control

The Ohio Farmers Union supports the right of law-abiding Americans to gun ownership. For many farmers and ranchers, firearms are an essential management tool for hunting, livestock euthanasia, predator control and self-defense – especially in isolated locations. Our laws should be strengthened to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and those with a history of serious mental instability. We strongly support mental health awareness, diagnosis and treatment. We strongly oppose, however, the notion that guns belong in all schools.

FSA Farmer Loan Programs

FSA farm loan programs should be put on stable, consistent funding to avoid constant delays and backlog. Ohio FSA now has over \$40 million in approved but unfunded loans.

Ohio Farmers Union urges Congress to adopt a consistent funding mechanism for FSA's Farm Loan Programs through CCC.