

Ohio Farmers Union

Special Orders of Business

for 2016

Adopted by the Delegates to the 82nd Annual Convention
Columbus Airport Marriott
January 30, 2016



Special Order of Business
2016-01
Water Quality Issues in Ohio and Ag Nutrients

The Ohio Farmers Union appreciates the actions of the Ohio General Assembly along with state and federal agencies to address toxic algal blooms in Lake Erie and other lakes and rivers. Despite millions of dollars of investment and regulatory measures, the problems persist.

OFU renews our support for a targeted and limited strategy, based on robust monitoring to find hot spots, including those outside of agriculture, and focused applications of effective conservation onto those areas.

Special Order of Business
2016-02
Current International Trade Issues

The Ohio Farmers Union remains opposed to the Trans-Pacific Partnership and urges members of Congress to vote against its ratification.

OFU remains troubled by currency manipulation by some U.S. trade partners, including Japan and China, and urges Congressional action regarding this un-leveling of the basic field of play upon which international trade is conducted.

OFU admonishes any member of Congress who voted in 2015 to renew so-called "Fast Track Trade Authority" to the U.S. president.

Special Order of Business
2016-03
Pipelines and the Rights of Private Property Owners

There continues to be pipeline building pressure in many parts of rural Ohio. In addition to Special Order of Business 2015-04, the Ohio Farmers Union believes the following in relation to private sector pipelines and private property owners:

1. Any ingress or egress to work area across private land be planked with pads the full length of the access road.
2. No above ground structure be placed on cropland being farmed.
3. Only one pipeline per easement.
4. Soil will be stripped in three layers rather than two; as some trenches will be eight feet deep.
5. Compensation will be made on a pipe size and per foot basis instead of per acre.
6. Any septic tiles be replaced, and, if a back bed must be installed, the pipeline would bear the cost.

7. Any water pumped from trench while installing pipeline will not be piped on top of the ground.
8. Any pipeline on easement that would devastate or destroy a business should not be permitted.
9. Any drainage tile replacement will be done to the satisfaction of the landowner at the cost of the pipeline company.
10. We Urge Ohio to adopt a "Trespass Fee" to compensate private land owners for inconvenience or property damage.
(Wyoming and other states use such fees to compensate the state for "use" of their wildlife).

Special Order of Business
2016-04
Current Legislation Regarding CAUV

The Ohio Farmers Union supports further efforts to improve the Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV) Law, so that farmers can pay reasonable real estate taxes and remain productive and help to feed the world. Specifically the Ohio Farmers Union endorses SB 246 (HB 398) in the current Ohio General Assembly that would:

1. Update and clarify computations of the CAUV and help Ohio farmers stay on their land and preserve and protect "conservation" acres in Ohio.
2. This legislation would improve the formula for determining CAUV values for real property taxation in Ohio and clarify and better define the factors used to determine the capitalization-interest rate component used in our CAUV calculations.
3. This legislation would also provide that CAUV land used in a conservation practice, either state or federal program, would be valued at the lowest value assigned on the basis of soil type. This requirement would encourage farmers to engage in practices that protect the environment and water quality. Currently, under the CAUV rules, farmers are discouraged from participating in these programs because the farmland is taxed as though it is producing crops. The legislation would provide that conservation acres under CAUV would be valued at the minimum values used in the formula which would be appropriate because these lands are not producing any crop income.

All these improvements, plus others to come, are desperately needed to alleviate the skyrocketing increases (200-300%) in farm real estate taxes the last few years, which have led to a heavy and unwarranted "tax burden switch" onto the backs of local rural taxpayers. This tax relief must be granted if Agriculture is to remain the number one industry in Ohio!

**Special Order of Business
2016-05
Commodity Checkoffs**

The Ohio Farmers Union renews our objections to the use of government-authorized commodity checkoff funds for political purposes. We renew our call for state and federal auditors to closely monitor these multi-million dollar funds. We continue our call for all checkoff programs to be voluntary at the point of sale.

**Special Order of Business
2016-06
Real Food Challenge**

OFU urges the state of Ohio to accept the “Real Food Challenge,” which would commit the food service systems of major state institutions like Ohio State University to source 20 percent of their food from local, sustainable and humanely raised food.

**Special Order of Business
2016-07
Community Sovereignty**

Ohio Farmers Union has always supported the ability and authority for local communities to promote their own prosperity and determine their future by exercising their sovereign rights. Too often, these rights are being pre-empted by state laws or by the World Trade Organization.

We support the rights of communities to use the democratic process to determine the character of their food systems and the makeup of their mix of businesses and industries.

Special Order of Business
2016-08
Disposal Wells

The Ohio Farmers Union recognizes the growth in Ohio's oil and gas industry. We further note that along with our own state's wastewater from oil and gas operations, Ohio is accepting the hazardous wastewater from other states.

Much of this waste is being deposited in Class II injection wells throughout the state, many of which are older wells of suspect strength and construction.

Ohio Farmers Union urges state of Ohio officials to immediately place a moratorium on the further use of Class II injection wells for disposal of wastewater from fracking and other oil and gas operations.

OFU urges the state of Ohio to regulate that any new disposal wells that are intended for waste from horizontal hydro fracturing meet Class I standards which are more robust and overseen by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency.

Special Order of Business
2016-09
Funding Claims Under the "Predator Law" in Ohio

The Ohio Revised Code, Section 955.51, specifies a provision under the law to pay animal owners for the loss of animals at the fair market value indemnity for those animals killed by coyotes and black vultures. However, the Ohio General Assembly, since 2009, has not provided funding for the Ohio Dept. of Agriculture to pay for such losses.

Because of this, the Ohio Farmers Union should work with the Ohio General Assembly to appropriate funding in the amount needed for payment of these claims under Ohio law.