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PENNSYLVANIA STATE GRANGE



Summary of Legislative Policies

2006-2007

PENNSYLVANIA STATE GRANGE

Policy Development...

The Pennsylvania State Grange is a grassroots organization and, as such, our policy is derived and adopted at the local, county, state, and national levels. Local Grange members write resolutions to reflect the needs and goals of our membership.

Resolutions originate at the local level, in Subordinate Granges that have been the foundation and strength of the Grange since our inception 133 years ago. From the local level, the resolutions are considered at the Pomona or County level. Those that are approved, with or without revision, are then submitted to the PA State Grange. At the state level a committee structure is implemented to review and revise resolutions. During our annual convention these committees then recommend resolution approval or disapproval to our delegate body, comprised of at least 2 members from over 300 Granges. Resolutions that are approved and deal with national issues are then forwarded to National Grange for a similar process.

Once the resolution process is completed our policies can be implemented. One of the functions of the Grange is to seek legislative action in line with our established goals. We work with members of the PA General Assembly, our national Congressmen, and various government agencies to improve the lives of citizens across the Commonwealth. Legislative activity is accomplished at the local, state and national levels through a variety of arenas including legislative meetings, one-on-one contacts, and visits to the state and national Capitols.

To contact your elected leaders by mail:

State Officials

The Honorable (state senator or representative)
Senate (or House) Post office
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Federal Officials

The Honorable (federal senator)
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AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

GENERAL POLICY

Agricultural Funding, Research, and Promotion

The PA State Grange supports all facets of agriculture. Adequate funding should be provided on the state and federal levels for all agricultural programs including the development of new products. These programs should include state and federal services, extension, and all institutions that conduct agriculturally related research. We also support a predictable funding or tax base to guarantee a viable industry. This should include a disease control fund for eradication and indemnification purposes. We support all promotion programs and their expansion including check-off programs to finance the expansion of commodity markets. Foreign imports should contribute to research and promotion programs. Finally, we promote educational material to inform the general public about agriculture including public health issues at animal exhibits. (2001)

The Grange urges adequate funding for the USDA Pasture Lab. We also urge state and federal funding for a Bio-Security Lab 3 facility. This BSL3 facility should be built to best serve our varied plant and animal community concerns. (2004) Because of the threat of emerging animal borne diseases, it is paramount that we are prepared. The Grange encourages co-ordination between public and private partners to share data and communicate for the betterment of mankind. We also support efforts to upgrade, replace and build facilities for biological and agricultural defense. (2005)

We reaffirm our commitment to securing adequate funding for Extension Service staff. (2004)

We support the concepts addressed in a package of bills known as "Preserving the PA Farmer" including equine liability. (2005)

Animal Rights

Of continuing concern to farmers are groups who claim to be animal welfare rights protectors. Animals provide food and clothing. Every effort must be made to educate the public on modern livestock production methods. Those who are abusing animals in their care should be penalized according to generally accepted agricultural practices. Any legislation that addresses animal rights concerns must consider the adverse economic impact on food production, consumer food prices, and the farmer's welfare. (2001)

The Grange opposes any legislative effort to elevate the legal status of pets to companions rather than property. (2003)

Farmer Administered Medications

The Grange believes that farmers should be allowed to continue administering approved medicines to livestock. We encourage the development of alternative veterinary practices and believe that farmers should be given veterinary privileges to meet new production and management demands. We encourage all animal owners to establish a veterinary-client relationship. (2001)

Institutional Farms

We oppose selling state-owned institutional farmland. (2001)

Voting Procedures for the PSCFO

The PA State Grange recommends to the PA State Council of Farm Organizations that they amend their by-laws to require a 2/3 majority vote for the support of an issue. (2001)

Young Farmer Assistance

We support programs including the Farm Link Program to aid young farmers generate income and contacts which will help build the next generation of agricultural producers. (2001)

DAIRY

Class I Milk Price

We support an additional differential payment of \$4.00 per cwt on Class I milk in all Federal Orders that should be pooled nationally. (2001)

The Grange recommends that all federal orders have tighter restraints regarding opting into or out of pooling within the orders. (2004)

Dairy Promotion

We support dairy promotion by producer contribution of funds and by representation on the various promotion boards. (2001)

Exportation of Dairy Products

We urge that all agricultural commodities be treated equally when the U.S. government has products to sell and other countries desire to buy them.

We support the use of the D.E.I.P. program to expand the export of dairy products in an effort to establish markets throughout the world. (2001)

Foreign Dairy Operations in the U.S.

The federal government is allowing foreign investors to establish large dairy operations in the United States. We oppose any taxpayer money being used including government development funds to subsidize foreign investors establishing dairy herds in the U.S. (2001)

Imitation Milk Products

There are several companies who manufacture imitation milk products, and they use milk prefixes and terms as names for these products. We think this is misleading to the consumer. We recommend legislation to prohibit this type of practice in the future.

We also recommend that if imitation dairy products are sold, they should be in a separate display and clearly labeled as imitations. (2001)

Import Promotion

U.S. Dairy farmers are assessed 15 cents per cwt. to promote their products. U. S. Congress should assess imported dairy products the same amount as domestic products because they also benefit from generic advertising. (2001)

Market Development

Market development is needed for new dairy products that have been developed. These products need patent protection to recover costs. (2001)

We recommend that schools sell dairy and nutritional fruit drinks in vending machines. (2005)

MILC Program Extension

The Grange recommends that the MILC Program be extended past the September 2005 deadline. We also support revisions that provide dairy farmers assistance during periods of low milk prices without encouraging increased production. (2003)

Milk and Feed Trucks in State of Emergency

Trucks carrying or picking up milk or carrying food to grocery stores should be allowed to travel during a declared state of emergency. Also, feed trucks should be allowed to deliver feed to farmers for their animals. (2001)

Milk Marketing Board

We fully support the Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Act and oppose any effort to abolish minimum retail pricing. We recommend that the PA Milk Marketing Board continue with the same type of representation as they have at the present time.

The Grange suggests the PMMB consult with the State Treasurer in investing the funds from the Milk Security Law.

The over-order premium paid on Class 1 Milk produced, processed and sold in Pennsylvania covers approximately 20% of the total milk produced in Pennsylvania. Some groups would like to see this premium pooled across all of the milk produced in Pennsylvania. The Grange opposes the effort to pool these funds, believing that this would reduce the amount per cwt. to a minimal amount. (2001)

If the premium were to be pulled we believe that the money should be sent directly to the farmer. The Grange supports any effort by the PA Milk Marketing Board to limit the price the consumer pays for milk. We also support an over-order premium on all classes of milk that is paid directly to dairy farmers. (2003)

The Grange urges the PA Milk Marketing Board to continue supporting an over-order premium. We also urge the PMMB to develop regulations requiring payment of all current accounts before switching suppliers. (2004)

Milk Packaging

The Grange will work with the PA Milk Dealers Association to establish standardized packaging colors for each grade of retailed milk. (2001)

Milk Pricing

Due to a negative attitude toward animal fats in foods, the Grange encourages a change in the pricing of milk to recognize the value of solids, not fat, in the pricing mechanism.

The Grange will explore determining fluid milk prices by a hearing process rather than the cheese price to help stabilize fluid milk prices.

We support legislation that would establish a program to provide small and medium dairy farmers a price safety net. (2001)

Milk Protein Concentrates (MPC's)

We support inclusion of MPC's in tariff and import quotas that should be monitored and regulated by the World Trade Organization agreements. (2002)

Milk Security Law

We support the Milk Security Law as written, requiring all new dealers applying for a license to be bonded at 75 percent of the highest value receipts for forty days. (2001)

National Minimum Milk Prices

The Grange recommends a national minimum retail price for milk. (2001)

Termination Notices to Producers

Presently, a milk dealer or handler can terminate an agreement to receive milk from a producer with a 28-day notice.

We believe this is too short a period of time, as it causes an undue hardship on the milk producer. We recommend changes to increase the minimum notice time to 90 days. (2001)

ENERGY, FUEL, NATURAL RESOURCES

Energy – General Policy

The Grange supports increased research and development of all forms of domestic energy resources in order to broaden our energy base and reduce our dependence on unstable foreign sources for oil. Alternative and renewable energy sources should be researched and developed to

make energy consumption more affordable including co-generation facilities using agricultural biomass, renewable fuels, and waste. (2005) We should also improve our energy distribution system. A comprehensive program should be developed to address energy emergencies.

Conservation of natural resources must be part of any domestic energy program. We support the use of financial assistance and technical assistance to encourage energy conservation including recycling. (2001)

Alternate Fuels Tax

The Grange believes that alternate fuels should be taxed on their BTU value. Attention should also be given to electric motor vehicle use. (2001)

Bituminous vs. Anthracite Mining Laws

Regulations must be made to separate bituminous and anthracite mining. The two mining practices are now regulated under one law even though they are extremely different. Mining laws should reflect these differences. (2001)

Coal Bed Methane Regulations

The Grange supports a law that requires the coal bed methane gas developer to obtain landowner consent prior to entering the property. (2003)

Marginal Farmland for Timber Production

Marginal farmland accelerates soil erosion when put into row crop production. This land holds great potential for wood fiber production which is less prone to soil erosion. In addition, such marginal lands producing wood fiber could utilize animal wastes and sludge as nutrient sources. The Grange advocates the establishment of an incentive program designed to place marginal lands into wood fiber and energy production, to maintain a wood base as a renewable resource. (2001)

Preference Clause

We believe that benefits from publicly owned resources should flow back to the public. In the case of electric power that is generated at federally owned dams, the power should be sold on a preferential basis to nonprofit consumer-owned utilities by rural electric cooperatives and municipal electric systems. (2001)

Small Quarries

The Grange supports legislation that would remove small-scale quarry operations from the definition of surface mining. (2001)

Smart Metering

We urge the Public Utility Commission (PUC) to authorize smart metering technology and use so farmers can sell electricity generated on the farm from sources such as methane digestion to utility companies. (2005)

Surface Mining

We favor legislation that would permit surface mining on one acre or less, without obtaining a permit. (2001)

Tributary Strategy/Nutrient Trading

The Grange commends the efforts of DEP to develop the Tributary Strategy and Nutrient Trading between point and non-point sources of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment. We are concerned, however, about the lack of identified nutrient value assigned to projects. We believe legacy sediment and legacy nutrients are an integral and important portion of any nutrient strategy, because without these two giant contributors of nutrient sediment being understood and addressed it will be virtually impossible for PA to meet the 2010 reduction to the bay. Values should be established for important programs such as precision farming, improved animal nutrition, new cropping practices, or most of the already identified practices. We believe that the PA Department of Agriculture, the State Conservation Commission, the local conservation districts, and interested agricultural organizations should be involved in developing tributary strategy and nutrient trading, and we pledge our cooperation with these organizations. We suspect that municipal governments will need assurances of long term contracts for the purchase or sale of nutrient credits. Conditions for landowners change so that they will be interested in granting short term contracts. Therefore we support the establishment of local brokers who know and understand both needs and can act as the arbitrator. (2005)

Water Policy

Water is a natural resource most important to agriculture. We recommend that any legislation passed make clear agriculture's rights to water understanding that farms be allowed a full allocation of water for the purposes of food production. Agriculture needs to document its water use to establish a database for industry needs. The Grange opposes water use fees for agriculture irrigation or livestock use. We support reservoir storage that is publicly funded to satisfy the Susquehanna River Basin Commission consumptive use regulations for agriculture.

The State Grange encourages the completion of a state Water Management Plan and will continue its efforts to ensure that Pennsylvania agricultural and rural communities will be fully considered. We recognize that small-scale conservation projects like small dams can give more benefits for flood control and water storage than large projects. We promote hydropower development.

We believe that PA must increase its efforts to conserve our pure water resources. Funding should be provided to treat contaminated water and adequately monitor and inspect potential sources of pollution such as sanitary landfills. (2001)

We also support the development of a PA Ground-Water Management Plan. This plan should involve "well-head" management and pertain to certain pesticides identified by EPA as possible groundwater contaminants. The Grange advocates better water recharge practices to minimize nutrient loss. (2005)

ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND PROTECTION

Abandoned Oil and Gas Leases

We believe that all oil and gas companies should be required to submit a notarized, signed notice to the county tax office when landowners no longer receive royalty checks or when leases are abandoned or not renewed. (2001)

Air Quality Standards

The Grange supports the delay of implementing new air quality standard regulations until studies determine that agricultural operations contribute adversely to the environment. We support the control of substances that contribute to ozone deterioration. (2001)

Bottles and Can Deposits

The Grange supports legislation to require a deposit on non-biodegradable beverage containers sufficient to encourage the returning or recycling of these containers. We believe that a statewide referendum should take place. (2001)

Composting

The Grange believes that composting should be an integral part of any recycling effort. Problem animal wastes can enhance a composting mix and make a more valuable product. The value and acceptability of this composted product can be enhanced if it is of known quality. The Grange will work with DEP and others to develop labeling requirements and quality standards for composted material. (2001)

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations

The Pennsylvania State Grange does not separate small farms from large farms. All farming activities should be within the scope of the laws and regulations governing their operations. Any changes to the present CAFO regulations should be considered by the General Assembly and not done by policy of an agency. All permits required relating to the size of the operation should be processed in a timely manner. We feel public hearings should not be necessary to meet permit requirements. When state regulations are met the local municipalities cannot deny local permits. (2001)

Environmental Impact

We encourage the development and implementation of technology to more effectively maximize the potential for a positive environmental impact. We support the development and implementation of economically feasible, environmentally sound and socially acceptable alternatives to address current environmental problems. These problems include sewage disposal, transportation systems, urban sprawl, consumptive resource and energy use, and degraded air and water quality. We also encourage the development of resource recovery, reuse, and recycling that will replace our current waste handling industry with a more desirable resource handling industry. (2001)

Fly Ash

The Grange supports the production use of fly ash by adopting the USEPA – Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines. We support the establishment of an incentive program to find and promote new productive uses of fly ash. (2002)

Food Processing Residual Waste

At the present time, waste material from the food processing industry is classified under the municipal waste regulations. We support an amendment to those regulations that permits food-processing facilities to utilize their residual agricultural organic waste on farm ground under normal farming operations. (2001)

All food waste should be considered food processing waste when used for feeding domestic farm animals or spreading on agricultural land for soil enrichment. Also, farmers should be able to feed livestock food processing waste without additional local licenses and permits. (2002)

Hazardous Waste Sites

The Grange supports legislation providing incentives to public and private facilities that generate hazardous waste. The goal would be to implement source reductions, recycling, and resource recovery to reduce demands on landfills. We believe hazardous waste management facilities should be stringently monitored to eliminate adverse environmental effects. We recognize that the interstate movement of waste is constitutionally protected as interstate commerce. (2001)

Innocent Landowner

At times, property owners are responsible for the cost of removing sources of water and land contamination they did not create and, in some cases, had no knowledge of. We recommend enforcement of the CERCLA law, which gives relief to these property owners. (2001)

Low Level Nuclear Waste

The volume of radioactive wastes can be decreased by approximately 95% through the use of Liquid Metal Fast Breeder (LMFB) reactors. We support the development of the LMFB reactor or other types of nuclear recycling to lower the volume of nuclear waste. (2001)

Nutrient Management

We support the current PA nutrient management program for all high-intensive livestock operations. We support uniform standards for waste handling already described in the PA Manure Manual and Nutrient Management Law, and that the state standards supersede local regulation.

We recommend expansion of the Nutrient Management Act to include all recreational animals. The Grange favors the philosophy and flexibility of self-regulation fostered by encouraging Best Management Practices. (2001)

Any farm property covered under a Nutrient Management Plan shall classify leachate from forage silos, food processing waste storage bins, or any food storage containers as spreadable agricultural nutrients. Also we oppose legislation that would subsidize manure transportation costs. (2002)

All nutrient management plans should be scientifically developed and allow for the least restrictive approach possible. Neighbors should bear some responsibility for compliance to setbacks. All efforts to address subjective air quality should be reasonable. Any agriculturally impaired stream designation should be science based and participation should be voluntary for farmers. (2004)

RAMP

Under the Surface Mine Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, reclamation fees are authorized to be collected for the Rural Abandoned Mine Program. These funds are appropriated by Congress from the abandoned mine reclamation fund. Only a small portion of the total amount has been released, and PA has received a very small percentage of mine reclamation work. We urge the balance of the money be appropriately distributed. (2001)

Residual Waste

The Grange will work with DEP and others to ensure that new regulations on residual waste, currently under development and review, adequately address agricultural concerns. (2001)

Sewage Systems

New technologies for residential waste disposal are developing. These options would give the landowner substantial savings and may be more environmentally sound. We support the development and use of alternative sewage systems for the treatment of residential waste. (2001)

Sludge as a Nutrient

We see progress being made in waste reduction and conservation by allowing some qualifying sludge to be considered a nutrient. We encourage DEP to allow sludge use on agricultural land that is governed by the Nutrient Management Law rather than solid waste regulations. We endorse uses of qualifying sludge as a fertilizer. (2001)

Solid Waste Management

We recommend that solid and liquid waste must be totally unusable before it is disposed of by incineration or in landfills. Any waste by-product that can be recycled or re-instituted should not be classified as waste.

We recommend that local governments work together and develop regional areas for solid waste disposal. These regional areas should be funded from both private and public monies. (2001)

Superfund

The Grange supports a Superfund Reform Bill that emphasizes clean up and minimizes litigation. (2004)

User Fees

We support modest user fees for those benefiting from national and state park visits. (2001)

Vector Study

The Grange supports an expansion of the DEP Vector Study to control vectors such as Deer Ticks and Mosquitoes that pose a threat to PA. (2001)

Vinyl Recycling

The Grange supports the expansion of recycling efforts to include vinyl products, which do not dissolve or decompose in landfills. (2001)

Wetlands

We believe that wetlands should be readily identifiable by natural characteristics and classified to distinguish their relative value. Each classification of wetlands and their use should be protected by regulations that reflect their relative environmental value and should not be taxed. Wetlands and other environmental habitats should be conserved rather than preserved and we would like to see a reasonable agricultural application of the wetlands law.

The Grange suggests that a developer be required to replace a wetland area that he is developing with another wetland area in the same municipality if at all possible. Also, wetland legislation should include a provision making the wetland mitigation process more public before granting the permits. The Grange urges government agencies to consider declaring a wetland only if the land mass is at least one acre.

We recommend that property owners and local government officials be furnished with a well-defined wetland map of the property. (2001)

FARM POLICY

Agriculture Laws

The Grange supports laws that will enhance farming, and not allow local governing units the ability to restrict farming operations. (2001)

Agricultural Regulations

We support an overall review of all agency regulations that affect agriculture. The purpose of the review would be to assure that agency requirements are no more stringent than standards imposed by federal law, to minimize costs upon the regulated community, and to eliminate outdated and redundant regulations. (2001)

Crop Insurance

Because crop insurance is an important risk management tool for farmers, we urge adequate state and federal funding for the program. (2004)

Disaster Relief

The Grange will do everything in its power to assist all types of farmers to secure state and federal disaster aid. (2001)

The Grange supports state and federal feed purchase disaster assistance programs for farmers who grow their own feed, but lack good quality crops due to poor weather conditions. (2004)

Farm Revenue

The Grange supports legislation, regulation, and administration of all government laws and programs that protect and improve the social and economic position of PA farmers. Conversely, the Grange will attempt to prevent laws and programs that may be unfair to farmers and detrimental to the farm community. (2001)

Government purchased surplus food should not be sold at reduced prices becoming competition for existing farmers. Surplus food should be donated to charitable organizations. (2003)

Preventing Lawsuits

In recent years there have been lawsuits against farmers and processors over odors, runoff, etc., as areas of the state are developing. We support legislation that requires all conflicts between developers and homeowners against agricultural operations be settled by the use of various state and federal agencies before a lawsuit can be initiated so agriculture and suburbia can coexist. (2001)

Right to Farm Act

The Grange urges townships to allow farmers to increase their farm income by operating small repair shops or providing other agri-business related services. Also, we support legislation that requires prospective property purchasers to be informed of an adjacent agricultural operation and that the possibility of dust and odors exists. (2001)

FERTILIZER AND PESTICIDES

Environmental Liability

State and federal governments strictly regulate the use of pesticides, herbicides, and other agricultural chemicals. We seek legislation clearly establishing that the failure to use chemicals according to the label is the only basis for establishing a liability claim against a farmer or other landowner due to alleged damage or injury arising from the use of such chemicals. (2001)

Pesticide Bans

Because pesticides are essential in food production, we oppose pesticide bans as long as the pesticide has been applied according to label directions and no residue has been found on the food product. We believe that the public should be notified in areas where pesticides are used and that farmers should be continually updated on the handling and use of hazardous materials. (2001)

Soybean Check Off

The Grange urges the PA and U. S. Soybean Boards to continue focusing on aphids and rust research. (2004)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Country of Origin Labeling

World trade is important, but we must make every effort to ensure safety. To that end, we support world safety standards. A Country of Origin Labeling Program should also be implemented on all imported food products. (2003)

Export Trade

We support the development of export trade for PA produced agricultural products. (2001)

Foreign Investors

There is a growing trend in the U.S. for foreigners or foreign corporations to purchase U.S. based marketing companies of agricultural products. This trend could lead to foreign control of domestic markets including price level requirements for agriculture products at the farm or consumer level. Therefore, the Grange is opposed to foreign companies owning marketing companies of agricultural products in the U.S. (2001)

GATT Negotiations

Due to a General Agreement of Trade and Tariffs (GATT) definition change, domestic tomato processors are now required to prove that foreign imports are the overriding cause of financial loss before a countervailing duty will be implemented. To protect our domestic processors, we recommend that any financial loss to the domestic tomato industry trigger a duty on foreign tomato products. We also request that an agriculture representative be a member of the GATT negotiating team. We believe all foreign subsidies paid on vegetables and fruits should be eliminated.

The Grange Dairy Committee has looked at the position of the dairy industry in the GATT Agreement and has found that the dairy industry is put in a difficult position now and in the future. We, therefore, oppose GATT in its present form unless some equity is found with the European Common Market and export sales are allowed into Canada. (2001)

Imported Products

The Grange recommends that more stringent inspection be required for imported products. (2001)

Unfair Foreign Competition

We support stopping all subsidies in the world trade market and creating a fair and open market for all. (2001)

We support a fair trade bill. (2003)

HUNTING AND WILDLIFE

Crop Damage by Wildlife

Various wild animals cause crop damage. The PA State Grange believes that the Game Commission should institute a program to financially reimburse farmers when crops or livestock are ruined. (2001)

We urge the PA Game Commission to work with the PA Department of Agriculture to develop an effective groundhog reduction program. (2004)

The Grange urges farmers to work with the federal Wildlife Conservation Control Units to protect property from deer, vultures, and other wildlife bird problems. (2005)

Canada Geese

Numbers of Canada Geese and wildlife fowl have increased significantly in certain areas of the state. These birds are feeding on farms and causing crop damage. We will work with state and national authorities to allow for a statewide goose-hunting season from September 1 through December 31 with no seasonal limit per hunter. If a statewide season is not possible, we suggest that farmers be given unlimited onsite permits to reduce the flock size on their land.

We support the steps that the Pennsylvania Game Commission is taking to alleviate resident geese problems.

The Grange supports the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed "Alternative F" General Depredation Order, to significantly reduce resident Canadian goose populations using a variety of strategies. (2001)

We recommend that the snow goose season be kept open until March 31. (2002)

Fox Hunting Season

The Pennsylvania State Grange urges the Pennsylvania State Game Commission to establish a longer open season for foxes. (2001)

Game Law Reform

We recommend that the time for possession of wild meat be extended to an indefinite time period. Also, we support the expansion of safety zone areas. (2001)

The Grange opposes any merger between the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. (2004)

The Grange urges the Game Commission to enact a program allowing a farmer experiencing deer damage to designate an approved licensed hunter of his choice to act in place of the farmer to reduce the damage on his property. (2005)

Japanese Beetles

Japanese beetles have become more and more abundant and destructive. The costs to control and eliminate the beetles have become staggering for farmers and fruit growers.

We favor the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture supplying aids or funds to spray the beetles, or setting up a program to eliminate the beetles. (2001)

Spot Lighting

The Grange recommends a change in the Game Law allowing for "NO SPOT LIGHTING" signs to be posted by a property owner. These signs would be similar to the posting of "NO TRESPASSING" signs and would notify the spot lighter of areas that landowners do not want disturbed. A violation of these posted areas should be \$500.00. We believe that spot lighting is a privilege and should not create a discomfort to the property owner or livestock. We also believe that spot lighting should be banned between the hours of 10 p.m. and daybreak, with no spotting allowed from October 1 to December 31. (2001)

Sunday Hunting

We oppose Sunday hunting on any land and support the antlered and antlerless deer season be extended by one week, allowing more hunting time and more harvest of deer, without Sunday hunting. (2005)

Tax Credits for Deer Damage

We urge that local tax credits be extended to farm owners who have suffered crop loss as a result of deer or bear damage. The Game Commission should make reimbursement to the county taxing agencies where this damage occurs. (2001)

Trapping

The Grange opposes any restrictions on trapping other than those necessary for practical wildlife management. (2001)

Turkey Hunting

For safety reasons, the use of single projectile bullets for turkey hunting should be prohibited in the 12 turkey management areas when deemed unsafe by the PA Game Commission. (2001)

LAND USE

Ag Exemption from Development Plans

Some municipalities now require farm operators to provide them with a land development plan when any agricultural building is erected on a farmer's property. We do not believe this is necessary as long as the individual meets all setback requirements and does not plan to inhabit the structure. (2001)

Ag Land Condemnation Board

The Grange believes that public lands should be considered when roads, railways, pipelines, power transmission lines, hazardous and low-level radioactive waste, and other environmentally sensitive facilities are located. Also, we contend that the Ag Land Condemnation Board should be empowered to review and intervene when utility projects threaten valuable agricultural areas.

The Grange supports legislation requiring all municipal entities and authorities to receive approval from the PA Ag Land Condemnation Board prior to eminent domain proceedings on farmland. (2001)

Ag Land Preservation

The State Grange supports state agricultural land preservation laws and legislation enhancing the preservation of family-operated farms. As long as the land remains in agricultural use, any farm enrolled in a county Agricultural Land Preservation program should be permitted the subdivision of any or all of its farmland, subject to local or county ordinances. To further promote the program, there should be no closing costs for farmers when they participate in the Installment Purchase Agreement Program.

Since many of the best qualified people for farmland preservation boards are also people who may want to participate in the program, we recommend that these individuals be able to participate in the program and serve on the boards at all levels. Land Preservation Boards should include at least two active or retired farmers. (2001)

The Grange supports the inclusion of land with cell towers and wind generators into the farmland preservation program. Also, any electricity generated through these means could be sold. (2005)

We support the federal Family Farm Preservation Act which relieves the capital gains tax for the sale of preserved farmland. (2005)

Emphasis should be given to preserve farms in blocks so as to protect more viable parcels of land instead of just open space. (2005)

Agricultural Security Act

We believe that farm property owners should have the right to put all of their acreage into an Agricultural Security Area regardless of zoning, and particularly in situations where the farmer is operating in a nonconforming use. Any land in an agricultural security area that is transferred to a new owner should continue to be included in that agricultural security area unless the new owner wishes it otherwise. (2001)

Agricultural Zoning

With Agriculture the number one industry in Pennsylvania, we urge all townships to adopt stricter agricultural zoning laws to preserve agricultural land and open spaces. (2001)

The Grange opposes any local zoning that hinders family farm operations or that is more restrictive than the State Nutrient Management Plan. (2001)

We oppose transferring agricultural deed restrictions from one land parcel to another. (2002)

We will work with all government entities to strengthen agricultural zoning to better protect agricultural use of land. (2005)

Clean and Green

We believe that property assessments should be based on property use and should not change until a final subdivision and land development plan is recorded in the recorder of deeds office. (2001)

Farmland enrolled in Clean and Green should not have to be subdivided to build a residential dwelling for family members and employees who are employed on the farm. (2002)

The Grange reaffirms our position that all Clean and Green standards be uniform. Also, all regulation changes should “grandfather” existing Clean and Green participants. (2004)

Commercial Development of State Parks

We oppose any proposal to allow private developers to build hotels or any other commercial projects in state parks. Also, the state legislature should not authorize any funds to study these projects. (2001)

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

The Grange supports the NRCS regulations concerning CREP to only enroll highly erodeable soils into the program. Also, we oppose public money being used to fund the CREP program unless hunting is allowed on the land. The Grange supports the Conservation Security program because it rewards working farmers and historical landowners for continuing contributions to environmental quality. We also support the re-establishment of the Grassland Reserve Program. (2005)

Controlled Burning

The Grange recommends revision of state statutes allowing regulated burning as a management tool for agriculture, forestry, and resource management. (2002)

Eminent Domain Protection

Some municipalities have ordinances establishing the "Right of First Refusal" where the municipality has the first opportunity to purchase a property at the fair market value as part of a county open space program. The Grange recommends that a farmer be allowed to give the municipality the first right of refusal in the purchase of his farm when eminent domain proceedings are forthcoming. (2001)

The Grange opposes the use of eminent domain to acquire property not needed for public services or to be used for economic development. (2005)

Endangered Species

If an endangered plant or animal is found in a unique habitat and the land use is restricted as a result, the land should be assessed for taxes in a manner that reflects its actual use value. (2001)

Forester Certification

The Grange supports a state certification program for professional foresters. We see this as a means to protect forest landowners and the forest resources of the state. (2004)

Grazing Statistics

The Grange urges the National Agricultural Statistics Service to monitor and report the production of grazed acres as land use. (2004)

Landowner Liability

The PA State Grange does not believe that landowners should be liable for injuries to trespassers who enter or hunt on property with or without the owner's consent, provided that the owner does not maintain known hazards. (2001)

The Grange supports legislation to protect landowners who allow recreational equine activities and to protect those involved in those activities. (2002)

Anyone engaged in an illegal activity should not be protected under liability laws if he gets hurt on the premises. (2001)

Local Control

We support legislation giving a local municipality, local school district or county government the right to review property sales in excess of 25 acres within their jurisdiction. Also, if groups such as conservancies own land and will not allow utilities to improve the area infrastructure, the land should be sold or the conservancy should pay full taxes on the land. (2001)

Local Ordinances

We urge PA municipalities to adopt subdivision and zoning ordinances to regulate development.

The Grange urges the state legislature to exempt farms from local and county ordinances that restrict the use and construction of farm buildings as long as it does not cause public safety hazards. (2001)

The Grange supports legislation exempting promotional signs for seasonal crops from local ordinances. (2002)

Noxious Weed Maintenance

We believe that the PA Department of Agriculture should enforce the noxious weed law and encourage all state agencies to mow their noxious weeds in a timely fashion. (2001)

LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY

Animal Feed

We recommend that national protocols for animal feeds be established to eliminate risks that are associated with feed and feed handling. New uses for animal by-products need to be researched and if adopted, animal by-products should be removed from the food chain entirely. (2005)

Captive Born Animals

The Grange urges the PA Department of Agriculture to regulate the breeding and sale of all captive born animals instead of the PA Game Commission. (2003)

Hog Prices

The Grange supports legislation that prohibits any processor who directly or indirectly controls the manufacturing, processing, or preparation of beef or pork products with a total annual wholesale value of ten million dollars or more from owning, controlling, or operating a feedlot in the state. Also, these processors should be prohibited from contracting for the care and feeding of swine. (2001)

Imported Livestock

We feel the PA Animal Health Commission and the PA Secretary of Agriculture should regulate livestock importation, so farmers can be assured that imported animals are certified to meet USDA and PA Department of Agriculture health regulations before they are imported. (2001)

The Grange supports funding for a PA Bio-security Lab and the Animal Health Commission. We also support the creation of an "Outbreak Response Plan" through the Animal Health Commission to combat zoonotic diseases which spread from animals to humans. (2003)

Livestock Harvest

The Grange urges the development of regulations and mechanisms to enable all safe and wholesome animals to be harvested. (2004)

Mad Cow Disease

All animal imports including meat, meat by products, and bone meal from countries where Mad Cow exists should be prohibited until scientific data proves its safety to the American public. (2003)

Packers and Stockyards

The Packers and Stockyards Act is vital in agriculture. The PA State Grange feels that this law should protect poultry and poultry products. Also, we feel the U.S. Department of Justice should investigate any violations of anti-trust laws by any group in broiler production. (2001)

Prompt Payment

There are instances when farmers are not paid for their products or services in a timely manner. This causes a hardship and financial burden on farmers. If a bankruptcy occurs, farmers can lose millions of dollars. As a result, we believe there should be legislation requiring prompt payment for farm products. (2001)

Record Keeping

For liability protection, the Grange supports legislation requiring farmers to maintain animal veterinary records for up to two years after the animal has left the farm. (2004)

FAMILY ISSUES COMMITTEE

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

Industrial Hemp

The Grange urges industrial hemp research and education on its use. We support state and federal legislation allowing for the cultivation of industrial help. (2004)

Legal Drinking Age

We oppose lowering the present drinking age. (2001)

Legalization of Marijuana

We oppose any legislation to legalize the use, sale, cultivation, or distribution of marijuana in Pennsylvania. (2001)

Sale of Alcohol

We oppose the sale of beer and wine in grocery and department stores and any legislation liberalizing the sale of liquor and intoxicating drinks in Pennsylvania even if the state store system is privatized. Funds realized from the sale of the state liquor store system should benefit rural PA. (2001)

School Personnel

All school personnel should be randomly tested for substance abuse and appropriate action should be taken against violations. (2003)

BANKING AND LOANS

Agricultural Bonding

We recommend legislation requiring each buyer or broker handling agricultural products to be bonded to cover the purchase price or be covered by a letter of credit against the purchase or storage value of all items currently unpaid. (2001)

Auto Loans

We believe that automobile dealers should be required to comply with the Truth in Lending Laws when quoting loan rates, taking into consideration the discount not offered when the loan rate is applied to the interest payment. (2001)

Bankruptcy Laws Reform

Many farmers have taken severe losses because of debtors declaring bankruptcy under the present bankruptcy law. Drastic changes need to be made in this law in order to protect farmers with unsecured accounts. The Grange will support legislation that ensures employees be the first secured creditors in the event of a bankruptcy.

The Grange supports restructuring bankruptcy laws to require a percentage formula payment from filers who have income or assets, and to make it easier for courts to review bankruptcy history. (2001)

Pre-Approved Credit Card Mailings

The Grange supports legislation prohibiting credit card companies from targeting students with pre-approved credit card mailings. (2001)

CHILD PROTECTION

Child Sex Offenders

We seek a minimum sentencing of 25 years for first time child sex offenders without the chance of parole. We also support legislation requiring child molesters to wear tracking devices when released from prison. (2005)

Criminal Clearance

The Grange supports the requirements of Act 34 Criminal Clearance and Act 151 Child Abuse Clearance for volunteers and employees who are working with children and youth. (2001)

Foster Parent's Bill of Rights

The Grange supports the Foster Parent's Bill of Rights, which establishes high standards and a clear relationship between the agency, the parent, and the child. (2004)

We also support legislation granting foster parents the right to interview as adoptive parents if the child has been in their care for at least 6 months. (2005)

Travel Regulations for Foster Children

The Grange urges the Commonwealth to interpret, establish, monitor, and publish consistent travel regulations for foster children. (2001)

CRIME

Criminal Procedure

A number of judicial decisions have resulted in the exoneration of criminal defendants purely on procedural grounds regardless of their innocence or guilt. We urge legislation fostering a criminal justice system where the guilt or innocence of the accused determines whether he is incarcerated. (2001)

Electronic Monitoring Devices

The Grange believes that electronic home monitoring may be utilized until a person is convicted. Upon conviction, however, the monitoring time should not be counted toward prison time as part of a sentence. (2002)

Funeral Regulations

Due to the threat of abuse, the Grange supports regulation of the funeral industry and crematorium service providers. (2002)

Juvenile Crime

We recommend that the name of any juvenile committing more than one offense be published. We also recommend that each juvenile case be reviewed before release, and that rehabilitation could include imprisonment time extending past the age of 21. (2001)

Protecting Patented Technology

The Grange supports the system in place to protect patented technology ensuring protection for technological research. (2001)

Spyware

We encourage restrictions on spyware companies requiring them to notify computer users that spyware has been installed. (2005)

Stricter Sentencing

We support stricter sentencing laws for violent crimes to help our law enforcement and court personnel cope with added burdens caused by increases in crime. (2001)

Terrorist Attacks

We support the U. S. government in their policy of not submitting to terrorists' attacks and kidnapping demands. We also recommend that the U. S. government use every means possible to pressure any country to bring terrorists to trial for terrorist attacks against any American citizen. The Grange believes that anyone found guilty of being a terrorist who is involved in the death of United States citizens shall receive the death penalty. (2001)

Tobacco Use

The Grange supports the recent tobacco law and resulting penalties, which address minors purchasing or attempting to purchase tobacco products. However, we encourage further thought be given to the legality of permitting minors to actually have tobacco products in their possession. (2002)

We support a smoking ban in all public facilities. (2005)

DEAF

Sign Language Course

We recommend that high schools teach sign language for credit as an elective course if there is interest in the school district. (2001)

Sign Language Interpreters

Present laws in Pennsylvania make available court paid sign language interpreters for hearing-impaired persons involved in criminal cases but not civil cases. We recommend that this inequity be resolved and court interpreters be supplied for all court cases.

Sign language interpreters should be given the same privilege of confidentiality as doctors and attorneys so they do not have to reveal information garnered from interpreting. (2001)

People who are deaf (native signers), but are without current teaching credentials should also be considered qualified sign instructors until there are enough certified teachers available. (2005)

EDUCATION

General Statement

The Grange supports public education. We support the constitutional right of a thorough and efficient system of public education - a free and appropriate program for all children in kindergarten through 12th grade. We support equity of resources and educational opportunities for all PA students. Programs emphasizing strong academics as well as vocational training are needed. We encourage schools to work with communities and the state to foster skills and establish activities as a meaningful link to post graduate employment.

Many young people are finishing high school with poor reading and writing skills. Many are also dependent upon calculators and have trouble doing simple arithmetic. We urge our schools to place more emphasis on teaching the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic; and that more emphasis be placed in the high school curriculum on local government and environmental problems. We also recommend that the phonics system of teaching reading be re-instituted into all schools.

We recognize the continuing need for an adult education program and commend those who implement this program. An equivalency high school certificate is an asset to many who are unable to complete regular high school programs.

We recommend that all class sizes for grades kindergarten through 4 be reduced to 17 children. A well-rounded school curriculum should include vocational, technical, consumer sciences, arts, and humanities courses. (2001)

CPR Certified Personnel

The Grange supports legislation requiring all school personnel to be trained in life-saving measures including CPR and AED use. (2004)

Driver Education

Besides the benefit of having an insurance reduction for those who have had driver education, safer drivers result from driver education. We therefore support continuing driver education in public school districts.

We feel that an upgrade is needed in the driver's education program in public schools. The parents and school districts could share the cost. (2001)

Home School Regulations

The Grange supports uniform statewide home schooling regulations. We support mandatory yearly testing with the exam to be administered within the district of enrollment by a certified teacher. Predetermined levels of proficiency and/or evidence of yearly progress must be demonstrated in order for home schooling to be continued the following year. (2001)

Library Funding

We support adequate public library funding. (2004)

Long Distance Learning

We support the use of telecommunications to provide expanded learning. We recognize and confirm the importance of telecommunications as an evolving method of accessing education and support the use of such in all schools in Pennsylvania. However, we also recognize the importance

of a "live" teacher to foster comprehension and growth in all subject areas and recognize that telecommunications cannot replace a teacher. (2001)

Perkins Vo-Tech Act

We urge Congress to reauthorize the Perkins Vo-Tech Act, which created the Vocational Technology Education System. (2004)

Prayer in Schools

The Grange is opposed to the omission of the reverence to God from school ceremonies. We urge our legislature to place more importance on prayer and prevent further elimination of prayer from our school system. In fact, we will make every effort to restore prayer in schools. (2001)

Respect to the Flag

All Americans should respect and be proud of their flag and what it stands for. Americans should also understand and know the full meaning and proper etiquette of the flag. The PA State Grange recommends that all public schools require either the singing of our National Anthem or have a flag salute daily. (2001)

School Board Eligibility

Active school administrators and teachers should not serve as a school board director. (2003)

School Lunch Guidelines

The school lunch program has been affected by recommendations from the PA Department of Education. We recommend that USDA guidelines carry supremacy for school lunches. Additionally, we recommend that milk and fruit juice container sizes not be restricted in school vending machines. (2005)

School Personnel Strikes

Strikes by professional and non-professional school employees disrupt education and create a hardship on students. We believe that teachers should be prohibited from striking.

We support a revision to Act 195 requiring that all contracts for the coming year for these employees be negotiated before the end of the present school year. If a contract has not been agreed upon by that time, the parties should be required to submit the matter to Common Pleas Court for binding arbitration so that schools can open at the normal time and remain in session for the school year.

Because the PA Department of Education mandates a 180-day school year, regardless of strikes, the teachers' union and the school districts do not lose any money when a strike occurs. In order to prompt a financial need to settle school district contacts, we propose that the PA Department of Education devise a plan whereby striking teachers will be docked a portion of a day's pay for each strike day, and to withhold funding from the school system involved in the strike. (2001)

We support "last best offer" legislation to end teacher strikes in PA. (2005)

School Violence

The Grange supports programs for safe and secure schools. Furthermore we support cooperative interactions between the community, law enforcement agencies, and the school including the mandatory reporting of violence and crime within the school. We support the creation of a violence response plan that provides training to staff and students including purchasing instructional materials, hiring security personnel and /or obtaining security technology. (2001)

Service Learning

Volunteerism has played a major role in our nation. We support and promote a program allowing students to become involved in service learning projects. This program should be administered through the Department of Education and promote a program allowing students to become involved in service learning projects. (2001)

Teacher Continuing Education

Act 48 of 1999 requires continuing education for teachers. Employed teachers have opportunities through the school district to meet these requirements. We encourage school districts to offer any resident holding a teaching certificate the opportunity to participate in continuing education programs regardless of their employment status. (2001)

Vocational Education

The Grange is concerned with the quality of education available for any student interested in an agricultural career and supports every effort to maintain strong vocational agriculture training programs in our public schools.

The PA State Grange recommends the following:

1. Establishment of magnet schools of agricultural sciences in urban/suburban areas that would include computer literacy, supervised occupational experiences, and some changes in FFA.
2. Implement agriculture literacy programs and reform agriculture science programs, including adult programs.
3. Broaden the subject matter in the agricultural sciences. (2001)

GAMBLING

General Policy

We support the legalization of slot and video machines for use at the existing horse race tracks, but not at off-track facilities. We strongly believe that strict accounting and maintenance of machines be established. Those slot and video machines at the track should be regulated through the Lottery Division of the PA Department of Revenue. The existing lottery contract should be utilized and expanded to provide computer equipment and oversight. The profit for the track

should be no higher than the percent allowed by other states. We also recommend that a compulsive gamblers program be established.

We believe that all gaming revenue used for school district expenditures be distributed to the school districts on a per child basis.
(2005)

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Food Stamp Funding

The Food Stamp program benefits the health and well being of disadvantaged Americans and agriculture. This program should remain in the USDA and not redirected as state block grants. For better understanding, the USDA Food Programs should be more visibly accounted for in the USDA budget. The Grange encourages continuation and expansion of programs that educate consumers on balanced nutrition and economical ways to purchase and prepare food. (2005)

Government Assistance for the Elderly

Many elderly people suffer hardship during long illnesses or extended hospitalization because hospitalization insurance funds have been depleted.

The Grange recommends that government assistance programs be modified to aid these people.
(2001)

Handicapped Costs

Many handicapped people can achieve accomplishments using different aid devices. These devices are costly to buy and maintain. We would like to see legislation allowing companies to develop, market, and supply replacement parts and repair services at a reasonable cost to the handicapped. These companies should be granted special tax credits or other incentives to keep costs down on manufactured equipment, repair parts, and service. (2001)

Social Security

The Grange supports periodic cost of living increases in social security payments to be granted on a percentage basis. A family should be entitled to the Social Security payments for the month in which the recipient expires.

The Grange supports legislation that requires the government to stop spending or borrowing from the Social Security Trust Fund to hide a deficit or finance other expenditures. We do not oppose taxing half of Social Security income when other income in the household raises the income level over the tax minimum set by Congress. We believe that a permanent secure funding of Social Security must be addressed.

Terminally ill people should be permitted to apply for social security disability benefits upon diagnosis of the terminal illness and the application process should be completed within four months of the initial application.

We recommend that the Social Security Administration be required to stop payment of benefits to convicted felons. The courts should send pertinent information to the Social Security Administration. (2001)

The Grange supports the repeal of the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision sections of the Social Security Act for those who are fully vested in Social Security. (2002)

HEALTH AND INSURANCE

Emergency Service Coverage

The Grange believes that all HMO's should pay for 911 emergency services in life threatening situations or in the event of physical impairment. (2001)

FDA Approval

Currently, the FDA has jurisdiction on the manufacture of drugs. However, they do not have jurisdiction on drug strength. We believe that FDA should control the process from drug manufacture to the consumer. (2003)

Health Coverage Reform

The Grange believes that rural healthcare should be available and affordable. The Grange supports legislation that would require insurance companies to pay for medical and mental health treatment deemed necessary by the medical professional for each individual patient. (2001)

The Grange believes that funding should be continued for cancer treatment patients on Medicare so that they may continue receiving their treatment at their local facilities. (2003)

Currently, nursing homes are assessed a fee because of federal Medicaid changes. Medicaid patients, veteran's hospitals, and private long term insurance patients are not affected, but others are forced to cover the assessment fee. We urge the elimination of this Nursing Home Patient tax. (2005)

Hospital Cost Reimbursement

Medicaid and Medicare programs have set lower reimbursement standards for small rural hospitals. We recommend that state and federal programs be revised for a more equitable hospital cost reimbursement. (2001)

Institutional Care

The state should continue to provide institutional care for those who are unable to care for themselves. If private care facilities meet or surpass the level of care given by state institutions and the cost is comparable, the patient may be placed in private care.

The Grange supports the family's right to a choice of programs and services available for mentally and physically challenged persons. These options would include but not be limited to: residential placement, community living arrangements, partial placement, and day care placements.

We believe that all nursing homes should provide uniform care and services and that they should be inspected without prior notification. (2001)

Insurance Payments

Insurance premiums are, for the most part, due within 30 days. Therefore, when a policy holder files a proof of loss, we recommend that insurance companies be required to pay within 30 days following the receipt of the signed proof of loss which includes appropriate replacement or repair estimates. (2001)

Medical Malpractice

National standards for malpractice liability insurance coverage shall be established based upon the type and scope of the practice. The reform must include mandatory alternate methods such as arbitration to resolve disputes, and place a cap on malpractice awards. (2001)

Military Death Benefit

The Grange endorses a compensation increase to the surviving family of military personnel killed while on active duty. (2005)

Resuscitation

By law all emergency medical services personnel are required to resuscitate victims even if the victim has a visible DNR directive. The Grange supports legislation that permits emergency medical personnel to honor the "Do Not Resuscitate" (DNR) wishes of the patient. (2001)

Veteran Health Care

The Grange supports continued funding and services for our military veterans including consideration of additional veteran's centers if needed on a regional basis. (2002)

RELIGION

Reference to God

We uphold the importance of keeping "One Nation Under God" in our pledge and "In God We Trust" on our currency. (2004)

Religious Choice

We support the rights of individuals to engage in the religion of their choice. In so doing, we must remain cautious in our endeavors, as not to allow religious expression that will adversely impact the freedom of individuals with dissimilar beliefs. (2001)

Religious Freedom Amendment

The Grange supports the Religious Freedom Amendment to the United States Constitution and urges its adoption by Congress. (2001)

Same Sex Marriage

The PA Grange supports laws that will define a legal marriage to be between a man and a woman. (2004)

GOVERNMENT ISSUES COMMITTEE

Agency Enforcement

When problem situations arise, we believe agencies such as DEP and the Fish and Boat Commission should prove guilt rather than the landowners being forced to prove innocence. (2001)

Anti-Trust

Because of a court decision, farmers have not had the right to bring anti-trust activities against retailers. We support a repeal of that court decision. We also support National Grange policy on Anti-Trust laws. (2001)

Balanced Federal Budget

We endorse a balanced federal budget. We support a meaningful, bipartisan effort by Congress and the administration to eliminate runaway federal spending. A program of fiscal prudence should be developed so the U.S. does not have to rely on foreign interests for survival.

We believe any "peace dividend" money should be applied to the national debt. The Grange supports a reduction in foreign aid comparable to the same percentage as any reduction in domestic entitlements. The Grange would like Congress to target Corporate Welfare with equal budget reductions when reducing the federal deficit. (2001)

The Grange supports the Reform Commission that is reviewing federal agencies to become more efficient and cost-effective. (2003)

Campaign Reform

The Grange supports campaign reform in order to reduce spending and campaign length of time. We support a limit on individual and PAC contributions to a candidate for his/her campaign. We also support limiting soft money that is used to promote a candidate or cause. (2001)

Consolidation of Municipalities

We recommend that consolidation of municipalities be on a voluntary basis rather than a mandate by the county or state. (2001)

English as the Official Language

The Grange supports state and federal efforts to declare English as our official language. (2001)

Food Laws

We support human food safety laws and regulations that guarantee safe food supplies for agriculture consumers. We recommend reasonable food inspection incorporating sound scientific data for all domestic and imported food including pesticide use and animal feed to prevent food-related illness and disease. All imported products should be regulated as stringently as domestic products. We recommend that one federal office be designated to make food inspections.

We seek legislation exempting non-profit organizations from being required to purchase commercial appliances if the establishments are serving less than 36 events per year and can demonstrate safe food handling techniques. We also do not believe that retail sellers of products should be liable for products sold in their stores.

We urge the use of printed, un-coded expiration dates on all food products using a month, day, and year. (2001)

Local health departments should utilize state standards and regulations for human consumption of food handled and served by non-profit organizations. (2002)

Government Mandated Programs

Many times the federal government mandates programs to states, and states mandate programs to counties. States and counties are forced to fund these programs, causing a hardship for them. Government programs should be funded before being passed down to the state or local level. (2001)

Historical Survey Costs

We believe that the PA Historical and Museum Commission should be liable for all costs undertaken by the Commission when investigating historical sites. (2001)

Immigration

We support the enforcement of all current immigration laws. (2004)

The Grange seeks to implement a plan improving border security including stricter penalties for aliens and elimination of citizen benefits for illegal aliens. Illegal alien workers should not be eligible for social security benefits if they do not pay into the fund. (2005)

Landlord-Tenant Laws

There are many contradictions in the interpretations of existing laws that landlords must use in dealing with their tenants. We recommend that these laws be reviewed to equalize justice between the tenant and the landlord. (2001)

Legislative Perks and Expenses

The Grange believes that legislative members should be reimbursed for actual documented mileage expenses only. We also contend that other reimbursed expenses must be documented and that all free perks are banned. (2001)

Municipal Planning Code

To allow everyone the same opportunities and limitations, we support a universal definition of agriculture and commodities in the Municipal Planning Code. The Grange encourages agricultural interests and rural communities to become familiar with and take advantage of the new opportunities afforded by changes in the Municipal Planning Code. The Code contains new tools that can have a positive effect in maintaining our rural landscape and agricultural endeavors. (2001)

PA State Expenditures

We urge PA authorities to survey state expenditures to determine if allowing the private sector to accomplish specific operations could reduce costs. (2001)

The Grange supports the establishment of an independent auditing group to review each department and combine programs where possible to eliminate duplications. On the federal level, Congress should require the Office of Management and Budget to review agencies. Any program that could be more efficiently conducted by a private vendor should be transferred to them. (2002)

The Grange believes that the PA General Assembly should adhere to the PA Constitution and pass a state operating budget that does not exceed revenues for the fiscal year. (2005)

Pensions

Many local governments currently do not have their pension funds adequately funded. In some cases, all funds come out of current taxes.

It is our belief that all pension funds should be made actuarially sound within five years and that no new funds be created that are not actuarially sound.

The current pension plan for elected officials contains many injustices. In some cases, all the money deducted from the employees' salaries for the pension fund has been returned without any decrease in annual pension.

We would like to see the pension plan changed so that the return of any of the employees' money paid into the fund would only be allowed in regular monthly annuity payments.

We believe that government pensions should not exceed in one year the highest yearly compensation paid during their years of service excluding cost of living adjustments.

We recommend legislation to increase veterans' pensions at the same rate as Social Security increases.

The Grange supports a change in the pension laws allowing spouses to continue receiving pension benefits even if they remarry. (2001)

Price Gouging

During a disaster situation, we recommend that the U.S. President be empowered to freeze all prices immediately at pre-disaster levels for a period of six months to protect the public throughout the nation from price gouging. (2001)

Private Postal Service

The Private Express Statute gives the U.S. Postal Service the sole privilege of handling first class mail. There have been proposals to repeal the statute and allow private carriers to deliver first class mail.

The Pennsylvania Grange believes that repeal of the Private Express Statute will result in loss of our rural free delivery service, as private mail carriers would not find rural delivery to be profitable. We therefore support the Private Express Statute as currently in force and oppose any efforts to repeal the law. (2001)

Product Liability Law

Present Pennsylvania Product Liability Law adversely affects all consumers by allowing excessive damage, which may involve products manufactured 20 or more years before the injury occurred.

Present Pennsylvania Product Liability Law also benefits all consumers by assuring that the manufacturers and sellers of defective products remain liable for the injuries such products may cause.

Therefore, we support:

1. A change from the present No Statute of Limitations to the normal life expectancy of a product.
2. Liability only applying to the best manufacturer's practices at the time of construction.
3. Limited legal fees that would be governed by the state.
4. **Payments made only for actual damage with no punitive awards.**
5. *Limitations on damage and product liability awards. (2001)*

Real Estate Liens

Many times wrongful liens are placed on properties or property owners and the cost of litigation to clear the record and the owner's name is borne by the defendant. If the case was a proven wrongful lien, the costs incurred should be the responsibility of plaintiff, not the defendant. (2001)

Recognizing War Veterans

The PA State Grange recognizes and supports all veterans who have faithfully served or are serving in the Armed Forces of our state and nation.

The Grange supports "Keeping the Promise" bills. (2001)

We urge the federal government to increase the compensation to the surviving family of our American military personnel killed while on active duty. (2005)

Reducing Size of General Assembly

The reduction of members in the General Assembly would cause the loss of representation in both House and Senate for the rural and sparsely populated areas. We urge our legislators to oppose such legislation and support the present membership in both House and Senate so that the voice of all citizens still may be equally heard. (2001)

Required Attendance For Elected Representatives

The regular attendance of our elected officials is necessary to ensure good representation and grassroots government. We recommend a 90% attendance in regular session be required, exclusive of reasons of personal distress, etc., by our elected representatives. If their full salary is to be

drawn, it is to be on a per diem basis and reduced accordingly for each day absent under the 90% attendance. We oppose absentee voting. (2001)

Respect the U.S. Flag

We urge that the President and Congress take whatever action necessary to continue to preserve the flag and to instill patriotism in our citizens.

We favor an amendment to the Constitution to make it illegal to desecrate the American flag in any way. (2001)

The Grange supports the retention of the phrase, "Under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. (2002)

Right to Keep and Bear Arms

We uphold the Second Amendment to the Constitution, granting the right of United States citizens to keep and bear arms and reaffirm our opposition to legislation that would take this privilege away from them.

We favor the strengthening and stricter enforcement of present laws concerning punishment of persons involved in illegal acts where firearms are involved. (2001)

Special Elections

The cost of special elections to fill vacancies in Congress is huge. Therefore, we recommend that changes be made in our Constitution requiring vacancies to be filled at the next regular election unless such vacancies occur less than 60 days before the upcoming election. (2001)

Terms of U.S. and State Representatives

Because of the cost and amount of time it takes to conduct a campaign, we recommend that the term of office for U.S. and State Representatives be lengthened to four years. (2001)

Tort Reform

Pennsylvania's tort liability system is failing to achieve its goal of providing reasonable compensation at a reasonable cost to persons injured by the negligence of others. Consequently, the Grange will work with other groups to seek positive changes in the tort system to achieve more predictable solutions. In addition to liability reform, other reform efforts should include providing reasonable compensation to wrongly injured parties while protecting the rights of the individual, business, nonprofit organizations, or government agencies that are being sued. Finally, the Grange urges that where punitive damages are levied, the proceeds from that action shall not go to the plaintiff, but shall go to a fund that is established to pay legal costs for the poor and indigent.

The Grange supports legislation that discourages frivolous lawsuits by allowing judges to dismiss these suits.

We urge Congress to take action correcting the anti-trust laws concerning large corporations that form monopolies, not only in agriculture and food products, but also in other business and industries.

We have a concern that litigation can be brought against local and state governments when alcohol and substance abuse related accidents occur. We do not believe such frivolous lawsuits should be allowed.

The Grange supports legislation protecting pick-your-own operators from liability in the event of an injury. This protection should be extended to all recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, or swimming.

The Grange also supports legislation to protect property owners from frivolous lawsuits. The landowner should not have to bear the costs of the suit if he is deemed not guilty. (2001)

The Grange supports legislation limiting frivolous litigation, particularly as it relates to agricultural enterprises. (2004)

We support caps on punitive awards for insurance claims and caps on insurance premiums. (2004)

United Nations Funding

We support legislation that would withhold funding from the United Nations if it violates the rights provided by the second amendment to the U. S. Constitution. (2005)

U.S. Agriculture Committee

Since agriculture is the number one industry in PA, we encourage PA Congressmen and U.S. Senators to become members of their respective U.S. Agriculture Committee. (2001)

Volunteer Fire Charges

The Grange supports legislation mandating financial responsibility for anyone utilizing volunteer fire services unless that person pays a municipal fire tax. (2001)

ELECTIONS

Campaign Signs/Telemarketing

During election campaigns, the candidates running for various offices place signs along roads. Many times these signs are not removed after the election. We urge local governing powers to enact and enforce policy for the timely removal of these campaign signs. (2001)

The Grange supports amending the Do-Not-Call law to include political telemarketing. (2005)

Merit Selection of Judges

The Grange opposes the merit selection of judges and further supports measures to ensure that the voters of the Commonwealth elect judges. We also oppose the present system of voting for the retention of judges. (2001)

Presidential Candidates

We support legislation allowing naturalized citizens to become a candidate for President of the U. S. if they have been naturalized for a minimum of 25 years. (2004)

Presidential Primary Elections

The Grange believes that there should be a universal Presidential Primary Election in which all states vote for their presidential nominee on the same day. (2001)

Selection of Court Judges

We feel that Supreme, Superior, and Commonwealth judges should be elected on a district basis to ensure equal representation for rural PA. (2001)

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOR

Industrial Home Work

The Grange supports an amendment to the PA Industrial Home Work Law of 1937 that would permit work in residential homes. (2002)

Migrant Labor Laws

The fruit and vegetable industry in PA is largely dependent on migrant labor for growing and harvesting crops. To help the industry, we must protect growers from nuisance legislation.

Currently, state law requires migrant labor employers to pay unemployment compensation on their migrant workers even though these workers only work for a short period of time. For unemployment purposes, we recommend that agricultural workers be considered independent contractors if they are employed by piece work and set their own hours. We also believe that no unemployment compensation tax should be paid by agricultural enterprises unless they employ more than 20 full or part-time employees in 20 or more calendar weeks in a year, or pay \$50,000 in cash wages in any quarter of the year. (2001)

Minimum Wage

We recognize that the minimum wage is no longer at adequate levels. Therefore, we support efforts to raise the minimum wage to a level comparable to current economic needs. (2005)

Prevailing Wage

We support legislation to exempt all local and municipal governments from the Prevailing Wage Law. Any municipality can opt to come under the Prevailing Wage Law following approval in a voter referendum.

Further, we recommend legislation to increase the base limit on contracts from \$250,000. (2001)

Unemployment for 10-Month Nonprofessional Employees

The Grange opposes any type of unemployment compensation for 10-month nonprofessional employees. (2001)

Workers' Compensation

Christmas tree growers should be considered as an agricultural operation for purposes of Worker's Compensation Insurance rating. (2003)

TAXES

Accounting and Expenditure of Tax Monies

Recently, many cases of careless government spending and abuse of government expense accounts have been brought to the public's attention.

We strenuously urge a full accounting of all tax money at all times. The Grange supports legislation that amends the Pennsylvania Constitution, providing for tax increase limitations and spending limitations on the state and its political subdivisions. (2001)

Federal Income Tax

The Grange endorses a flat federal income tax to replace the current graduated income tax. The present tax language is complicated and should be re-written to simplify it. (2001)

Financing Local Governments and Schools

Property owners are becoming concerned over continual increases in property taxes. We feel that tax reform is desperately needed to aid local governments with severe shortfalls due partially to federal cutbacks. The state should provide 50% of school funding. State funding should also be provided to private schools through school vouchers. Cyber schools should only receive funding from school districts if they meet public school academic and student achievement standards. We endorse the following measures for local tax reform:

1. We support a reduction in real estate taxes. Revenue should be generated using a more equitable formula.
2. "Nuisance" taxes should be eliminated.
3. We endorse a local tax structure that allows for a home rule process whereby local taxing entities choose the most appropriate tax formula for their individual needs which could include a county sales or income tax. A combination of local taxing entities should hold public hearings for input from which a new tax formula could be developed at a county level.
4. We realize the various factors and problems that exist throughout the state of Pennsylvania in matters of assessment and tax collection to ensure the funding of educational and governmental programs. We recommend that a serious effort be made to codify all the laws affecting the various offices connected with collecting revenues.
5. We endorse an amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution that can be understood and specifies exact reductions and percentages of income tax or sales tax that can be used.
6. Unearned income should only be taxed after a reasonable exemption.
7. There should be some control on annual tax increases.

Grange urges the General Assembly to implement the voter approved homestead exemption to encourage local tax relief. (2001)

In the event of an increase in the statewide personal income tax or a statewide sales tax, we support a dollar for dollar reduction on property tax.

Building costs are a major factor in school district budgets, so we recommend that the PA Department of Education develop standard building plans for districts. Using these model plans, an architect will only have to modify the chosen plan to meet the condition of the site. (2002)

Inheritance Tax

The State Grange recommends legislation that would give a tax credit to those farmers who continue agriculture production for a minimum of ten years after inheriting a farm operation. The Grange supports an elimination of PA inheritance tax. (2001)

Local Share of Commonwealth Income

The Grange supports a distribution of revenues from the sale of Commonwealth-owned timber and other resources to the school district, township, and county in which the timber and other resources are located. (2001)

Mail Order Sales Tax

We oppose legislation that requires mail order houses to collect state sales tax for mail order purchases. (2001)

Sales Tax Discrimination

We support a sales tax exemption for all livestock industries except when horses are sold into a sport enterprise. (2001)

Tax Exempt Property

There has been legislation proposed which would place a public safety service charge of 25% of taxable value on privately owned tax-exempt property, such as hospitals, cemeteries, and Grange Halls. We oppose such legislation.

We oppose all taxes on non-profit cemeteries and property taxes for Grange halls. (2001)

Tax On Interest

We favor legislation seeking a tax exemption on the first \$250 of interest and dividend income on individual savings and on the first \$500 of interest income on joint accounts.

This action would enable small savers to keep pace with inflation and encourage the savings necessary to increase capital investments required to maintain economic growth. (2001)

TRANSPORTATION

MASS TRANSIT

Transportation Disability

Programs and transportation services at reasonable costs for adults with special needs are urged. Often these services are available in urban areas, but not rural areas. (2001)

Rural Mass Transportation

We support sufficient funding for rural mass transportation in Pennsylvania. (2001)

We support a predictable funding source for mass transit and general aviation that does not use highway funds. (2004) Funding for mass transit that has already been transferred from highway funding should be returned. (2005)

RAILROADS

High Speed Rail

PA State Grange is making high-speed rail transportation one of its top priority legislative goals to be competitive with other states that are proceeding with high-speed rail. We also support a connecting grid of high-speed rail transportation for the continental United States.

We seek the appointment of a High Speed Rail Commission, similar to the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, to implement magnetic levitation transportation in the Commonwealth.

We encourage our legislators to prioritize high-speed rail by enacting legislation that would provide public funds for this project and urge private funding for the system as well. (2001)

Railroad Freight Car Shortage

There is a railroad freight car crisis in PA for grain and feedstuff delivery. The Grange is committed to working with the PA Secretary of Agriculture to resolve this shortage so that there are adequate feed grains in PA at reasonable prices. (2001)

ROADWAYS

Bridges

The Pennsylvania State Grange supports adequate funding for a comprehensive bridge rehabilitation program.

We recommend that priority be given to bridge construction before road construction. (2001)

Emergency Road Clearing

We believe that farm vehicles should be permitted to aid in road and waterway clearing in an emergency situation. (2001)

Fencing

We urge PennDot to maintain the fences located along the interstate highways. (2001)

Highway Clean Up

The Grange urges legislation making it possible to hire able-bodied people receiving welfare payments to clean up roadways. (2001)

Highway Edges

Many accidents are caused by the drop-off edges of a newly constructed or resurfaced road that are not painted and hard to see. We recommend that these edges be built up with a binding material at the time of construction or resurfacing of roads. (2001)

Highway Funding

We oppose the diversion of highway fund monies to any use other than highway building and repair work.

The Grange recommends the continuation of the federal Liquid Fuel Tax on gasoline and diesel fuel combined with the registration fee to exclusively support our highways and bridges.

Pennsylvania's highways are strategically important to the interstate system. They must be adequately repaired to endure traffic and weather conditions. As a result, we support a change in the federal highway tax formula to include maintenance costs.

We feel that the formula for road construction and maintenance and also population figures of Local Governments should be updated to make the formula fairer for a growing community. (2001)

We request adequate funding for the maintenance and repair of existing rural state roads and bridges prior to building new roads and bridges, along with increased funding for these repairs and improved maintenance.

We recommend adequate maintenance of drainage ditch systems.

We also recommend that the governor support increased funding needed to improve rural roads. (2001).

The Grange believes that local municipalities should receive 25% of any gasoline tax increase for local road maintenance. (2003)

One half cent of any gas tax should go to the counties for maintaining county roads and bridges. (2004)

Highway Right of Ways

At times the private property that is used for highway right of ways is still on the taxing rolls. We believe that PennDot should contact the county assessor's office when land is used as a right of way so the landowner does not pay taxes on it. (2001)

Local Use of Radar

Radar equipment is expensive to purchase and maintain, and requires special training to operate. We oppose legislation that would allow municipalities to purchase and operate their own radar equipment. (2001)

Missing Links in Highways

Economic growth in rural Pennsylvania demands better access to four-lane highways. Many of these highways were never completed, causing missing links that discourage development. We would like to see PennDOT make every effort to expedite the completion of these highways. (2001)

Rest Areas

The Grange proposes that all rest areas throughout the United States be opened 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. (2001)

Road Identification

The Grange believes that road names and number signs should be installed prominently at intersections, and that all houses be designated by a number. Also, low weight and low height signs should be posted. (2001)

We encourage uniformity for all road signs and urge that they be kept free from obstruction. (2005)

Road Kill Removal

We recommend that the PA Department of Transportation and the PA Game Commission jointly develop a system for timely removal of animal carcasses from PA roadways. This program should include an educational campaign on contacting the authorities when an animal is hit. (2001)

Toll Road

The Grange opposes converting Interstate 80 into a toll road. (2001)

VEHICLES

Air Compression Brakes

Many commercial motor vehicles are now equipped with compression or Jake Brakes. Currently no brake lights are activated to alert other vehicles when these brakes are applied to slow a vehicle. We recommend legislation to require brake lights to be activated when these brakes are used. (2001)

Driver's License Examiners

The Grange supports mandatory licensing of all driver examiners before they administer skills driving tests so they are familiar with all licensing requirements. (2005)

Emissions Control

The Grange urges Congress to require that EPA only be allowed to issue regulations based on scientific data agreed to by a scientific peer review committee when changing automobile emissions standards. The Grange opposes emissions testing because of its cost and its discriminatory regional implementation. (2001)

Farm Vehicle License

The Grange supports an examination of the farm vehicle license plate and certificate of exemption programs with the purpose of clarifying and updating the allowed and disallowed uses that affect motor vehicles traveling to and from the farm. (2001)

Helmet Use

We support the re-instatement of the helmet law for motorcycle operators and riders. (2004)

NAFTA Trucking Regulations

We support re-negotiating the transportation section of NAFTA requiring all trucks traveling in the U.S. to conform to U.S. inspections and shipping regulations. (2001)

Oversized Implements of Husbandry

Anyone towing equipment on public highways should be required to have safety chains, safety pins, or other safety devices. This would not apply to operations by farmers on the immediate farm.

The Grange supports legislation establishing a yearly permit for implements of husbandry exceeding 14'6", allowing these vehicles to be driven, hauled or towed. (2001)

Permit for Movement of Products

The transportation of agricultural and other business products across our roads and bridges is limited, causing conflicts and losses for businesses as well as a hardship on employment. We support a simple, low-cost permit for the movement of weighted or perishable products in order to create more trade and encourage much needed employment.

Any truck with a farm registration or exemption certificate should be allowed to haul crops, livestock, or commodities defined under state agricultural law, within the limitation of weight, distance, and restrictions as provided under existing laws. (2001)

Pet Restraints

We urge individuals to restrain their pets by some means so there is not contact between the pet and the driver when a vehicle is in use. (2001)

Reflective Material

We recommend that all tractor-trailers have a reflective material on the sides of the trailer so they can be better seen at night. (2001)

School Busing Vehicles

The Grange believes that all vehicles transporting school children, including vans, be equipped with stop-traffic lights and be labeled a school bus. Consequently, all traffic should be required to stop when the lights are activated. Because seat belts in school buses are more hazardous to school student passengers than protective, we oppose mandatory seat belts in school buses. (2001)

Tractor Trailer Lengths and Weights

We oppose triple tractor-trailers in Pennsylvania. (2001)

Truck Permits

The PA State Grange endorses legislation allowing overweight users of limited usage roads to purchase an annual permit that will allow them to travel the shortest route from a full tonnage limit highway to the farm.

Vehicle Lights

The adding of running lights or fog lights to motor vehicles, especially four-wheel drive vehicles, has become popular. However, these lights are often installed in a manner that could be blinding to drivers of vehicles traveling toward them. We recommend that lights on all vehicles come under alignment restrictions for headlights during state inspection. (2001)

For the safety of oncoming traffic, the Grange opposes the use of high intensity headlamps on motor vehicles. (2003) We also urge the U. S. Department of Transportation to redefine the candlepower of motor vehicle headlamps, reducing hazardous conditions to oncoming drivers. (2005)

WATERWAYS

Barge and Water Carriers

We urge the PA Department of Transportation to recognize the important role that barge and water carriers contribute to the economy of our state. Some of the locks of our rivers are in need of repair and we support action by the federal government to provide adequate reconstruction of these facilities and endorse an increase in user fees to help defray maintenance costs. (2001)

UTILITIES

Cellular Telephone Use

The Grange supports legislation restricting the use of a hand held cellular telephone while operating a vehicle. We support a monthly fee on cell phone use to maintain the relay service for deaf and hearing impaired. (2001)

We oppose a cell phone directory until all incoming cell phone calls are free for the consumer. (2004)

We recommend that all cell phone and limited use telephone numbers be placed on the "Do Not Call" list. (2005)

Communications Towers

The Grange believes that there should be some regulations on communications towers. Specifically, we believe that all communications towers and power transmitters should be constructed so that any potential accident could not jeopardize existing structures. Tower owners should be responsible for easement purchases in a potentially affected area. (2001)

Electric Generating Plants

We support prompt licensing to operate new electric generating plants upon completion. Licenses should be prepared and completed as the construction of the plant progresses. (2001)

Project Construction

Before any utility or branch of government makes a decision to construct or install any project in a local governing body's domain, they should notify the local government unit so public hearings can be held. (2001)

Public Utility Markers

Public utilities have been using flags made from wire and plastic to mark buried cable and pipelines. Should some of the wire enter a forage harvester, combine, or bailer, the livestock eating the feed could get sick or even die.

We request that the public utilities be prohibited from using flags made from these materials to mark the location of underground cable and pipeline. (2001)

Public Utilities Regulatory Policies Act

The Grange supports reform of the Public Utilities Regulatory Policies Act so that non-utility generating stations can sell their output at competitive market rates and eliminate the excessive costs being passed on to the consumer. (2001)

Stray Voltage

Stray voltage adversely affects the growth and production of farm animals. Utility companies, especially dairy equipment companies, Extension Service, and the farmer himself are all concerned

and working to find answers to the stray voltage problem. The Grange urges the PA Public Utility Commission and USDA to develop guidelines for all PA electric companies prohibiting stray voltage of 1/2 volt or less. (2001)

Telecommunications

There are inequities in telecommunications equipment, service, and competitive rates between rural and urban areas. As a result, the Grange requests that the Public Utility Commission develop a fair and equitable telecommunications policy for urban and rural areas so they may be competitive with each other in the world marketplace. If the Public Utility Commission is unable or unwilling to develop such a program, we request that the General Assembly address the subject and develop an aggressive telecommunications policy for the Commonwealth. (2001)

The Grange feels that there is a tremendous need for broadband deployment in rural Pennsylvania. Expanding availability, price protection for residences and small businesses, and establishing educational programs for broadband usage in rural areas is vital. Priorities for service should be to schools and hospitals. Finally, we believe that broadband deployment should be at 100% across the Commonwealth. (2003)

Telephone Rates

With the deregulation of telephone companies, they may charge customers for individual costs, thereby making telephone services less expensive for heavier populated urban areas and more expensive for rural customers. This is known as "de-averaging." We recommend that no such de-averaging be allowed and that average rates be used similar to the United States Postal Service's first class mail. (2001)

Universal Service Fund

We support a universal service fund for telecommunication services only if it will benefit rural PA by making it a more level and cost effective service. We would recommend a cap of 50 cents per customer charge per month. (2001)

Utility Rates

The Pennsylvania State Grange will work with consumers, regulatory agencies and the Public Utility Commission to exempt Grange halls from demand meters and secure more equitable utility rates for brief, above-average usages. (2001)

We support the efforts of the Consumer Advocate and the Small Business Advocate in opposition to customer charges for system extension and improvement charges unless these expenditures have been approved through the base rate procedures of the State Public Utilities Commission. (2004)

The Responsible Utility Consumer Protection Act was enacted to allow for the immediate termination of utility service. We recommend modifying Chapter 14 to restore the previous 48 hour notice of termination and limit reconnection deposits to one month. (2005)