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PENNSYLVANIA STATE GRANGE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2024

2024-2025 STATE BUDGET

The Pennsylvania State Grange has been a vocal advocate for Agriculture line items in the state spending plan. Line items such as non-Penn State agricultural research that had been slated for deletion in the 2023 budget proposal were restored during the Budget process. In addition, the PA Department of Agriculture saw an increase in its general government operations budget. Other funding like Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, Penn State Extension, and the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine were spared the budgetary axe. The Pennsylvania State Grange will continue this advocacy in the next year for the 2024-25 State Budget.

DAIRY

The Pennsylvania State Grange is invested in supporting the Dairy Industry in Pennsylvania. Grange members have repeatedly testified to the PA Milk Marketing Board in support of maintain the current over order premium until a better program can be implemented.

The Grange is committed to collaborating with other stakeholders to work towards a dairy policy that will benefit the dairy industry in Pennsylvania and looks forward to continuing meaningful dialogue to that end.

PA State Grange strongly supports the Center for Dairy Excellence and efforts to expand processing of dairy products in the Commonwealth.

Pennsylvania State Grange advocates that whole milk be served in school meal programs and that imposters be prevented from using the word 'milk' to identify their product. We support Dairy Keystone Opportunity Zones to attract business investment in regional dairy processing facilities to reduce fluid milk transportation costs and get farmers more over-order premium dollars because their milk is processed in-state. In addition, the Pennsylvania State Grange was chosen as a member of the PA Dairy Future Commission established by Act 66 of 2019, which issued a comprehensive list of policy options for the Dairy Industry in 2020.

Other dairy issues include: supporting resolutions that direct the FDA to enforce their rule about mislabeling of milk; backing legislation which exempts milk haulers from Interstate traffic

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prohibitions when there is a weather emergency – NOTE: This was vetoed by Governor Wolf in the 2019-20 session

The Grange advocated for legislation which the General Assembly passed in 2021 that makes PA Milk more competitive in the U.S. market (lab-evidenced shelf life). This legislation was a recommendation of the Dairy Futures Commission. Grange saw success of this advocacy when SB 434 was signed into law that will extend milk's sell by date.

The Grange will be partnering with a coalition of stakeholders in 2024 to work on policy making a fairer system for all dairy farmers.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION and CAREERS

Pennsylvania State Grange continues to lobby for support of agricultural education and agricultural careers. We want to ensure that the Dept. of Education financially supports the Commission for Agricultural Education Excellence financially and that any legislation creating inter-agency job-finding resources have the PA Department of Agriculture as a formal member. To this end, the Pennsylvania State Grange is participating in a series of calls and workshops with both the PA Department of Agriculture as well as PA Department of Labor & Industry to not only identify needs but to implement practical workforce development.

BROADBAND: Cell Phone and Internet Access to High-Speed Broadband

This has been the top legislative priority of the Pennsylvania State Grange for many years.

Broadband is critical to rural Pennsylvania – in educating our kids, enabling Telemedicine to be effective, farmers being more efficient agricultural producers, and promoting economic growth by giving prospective employers the technology they need in order to invest in rural PA.

The Grange led the efforts to secure universal access to high-speed Broadband. Sadly, the COVID-19 crisis starkly demonstrated how devastating it is to be on the wrong side of the Digital Divide. If there was a silver lining, it was that legislators became more aware of the need. Several developments have occurred legislatively, and PA State Grange was there.

The Pennsylvania State Grange saw a big success to its' advocacy on Broadband when HB2071 establishing a Broadband authority passed the General Assembly and signed by the Governor in December of 2021.

The Pennsylvania State Grange sits on the Outreach and Education Subcommittee on the Broadband Authority.

SOLAR

The Pennsylvania State Grange has been the number one organization at the forefront of Large-Scale Solar facilities. Beginning at the Farm Show, the Grange held a panel on the issues surrounding solar. The Grange has been asked to help develop policy and legislation in the

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Capitol surrounding the development of Commercial Solar operations and has been asked to be on an advisory board with Tom Murphy of Penn State to study the issue.

FOREIGN OWNERSHIP OF PENNSYLVANIA AGRICULTURAL LAND

In October of 2023, the Pennsylvania State Grange identified the need to study the foreign ownership of prime farmland in Pennsylvania. To that end, the Grange is partnering with members of the General Assembly in 2024 to work on legislation to address concerns of ownership.

HEALTH FOR RURAL PA

Internet medical care (Telemedicine) is crucial to rural residents needing access to fewer medical facilities and doctors. This allows health care providers to monitor conditions, observe symptoms, and direct treatment. Pennsylvania State Grange supports Telemedicine but emphasizes that access to high-speed Broadband makes it work. **Pennsylvania State Grange was happy to see Rep. Tina Pickett's [HB2419](#), signed into law which would allow psychiatrists to offer mental health services virtually like they do with in-person services.**

AGRITOURISM LIABILITY

Pennsylvania State Grange worked hard to help legislators understand the urgent need for many farmers, particularly dairy farmers, to diversify income. Rep. Barb Gleim's HB 101 was passed by the Pennsylvania House and Senate and signed into law as Act 27 of 2021. Agri-tourism and Agri-entertainment are promising but the fear of frivolous lawsuits held farmers back. **The Grange continues to work on issues surrounding the law and in addition, is working with other groups and the Department of Agriculture on its interpretation of the law as it relates to hayrides.**

EMMINENT DOMAIN. The Pennsylvania State Grange lobbies to curb the use of eminent domain to take farmland.

HUNGER. The Grange works with other agricultural groups to increase State Budget funding for the PA Agricultural Surplus System (PASS) which integrates fresh farm products into food banks.

MARCELLUS SHALE ROYALTIES

Pennsylvania State Grange urges adoption of legislation to make sure property owners receive the full Marcellus Shale Gas royalties that are owed them per state law.

PROPERTY TAXES. A targeted property tax issue on which the Pennsylvania State Grange is working is legislation that would exempt historic Grange Halls from property taxes.

RIGHT TO FARM. The Grange opposes municipality efforts to prevent or restrict normal farming practices.

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TRANSPARENCY. The Grange works to enhance the people's right to know by working to preserve the state mandate that municipalities must advertise in newspapers re legal notices.

TRANSPORTATION. We support a ban on hand-held cell phone use and texting while driving.

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