

Farm Forum

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Editor,

As President of the Lancaster County Vocational Agriculture Teacher Association I am writing in regard to the letters to the editor over the last two weeks concerning the cuts to the FFA proposed by Governor Casey.

I wholeheartedly agree with Rep. Barley that Governor Casey needs to do more than lip service for the agriculture industry in PA. It was very interesting to see Governor Casey's picture in the Lancaster Farming as he visited Lancaster for the day. Does Governor Casey realize by cutting the funds to the FFA he is eliminating opportunities to thousands of FFA and agriculture students across the state? Here in Lancaster County alone we have over 500 FFA members involved in high school agriculture education.

I had my students write a letter to the Governor and other politicians in Harrisburg as a classroom activity. I was touched by how upset our students were in writing these letters. They were concerned about not only their future but the future of agriculture. They could not understand how the Governor of a state whose major industry is agriculture, could cut funding to agriculture so drastically. Even though they are not of voting age I am sure they are bringing home the message Governor Casey has sent out about his commitment to agriculture to their parents.

The agriculture teachers of Lancaster County and PA are also concerned about our future as agriculture educators in this state. In reviewing Ron Fredrick's letter to the editor I was shocked to see how little support is given to agriculture education on the state level as compared to our neighboring states. We as teachers are being asked to not only teach but pick up the duties previously taken care of by state staff.

The FFA is not just a group of agriculture students. Its purpose is to prepare students for the vocation of agriculture. We strongly urge Governor Casey to take a close look at the foundation of the state of PA and provide funding to support agriculture.

Deb Seibert
Manheim Central
High School
Agricultural Department

Editor:

I have read with interest during the past several weeks letters which you have received concerning Governor Casey's elimination of \$33,000 from the 1990-91 budget to help fund the Pennsylvania FFA.

I have been an agricultural education teacher in the secondary school system in western Pennsylvania for the past 25 years. I have always been encouraged by the support that agricultural businesses, legislatures, and interested community-minded citizens have given to the support of our agricultural education curriculum and the FFA organization. I feel pride in being able to deliver educational information to the Commonwealth's #1 industry. Agriculture has always been vital to the Commonwealth's economy.

I am concerned about the gradual erosion that is taking place in the Commonwealth for our agricultural education funding in the secondary programs. The staff employed by the Vocational

Education Department and the Pennsylvania Department of Education for Agricultural Education is declining rapidly. I am greatly concerned that in the next decade or two a large percentage of our people will be agricultural illiterate since each generation of young people is being removed from the rural farm setting which their ancestors had enjoyed. We must initiate a program so that more individuals will have full-time responsibilities in delivering agricultural education information at the state, regional, and local levels. Too many individuals are now employed in positions that do not have the understanding of the agricultural industry.

I have taught many young people who have acquired their leadership abilities through the activities of the FFA. These students receive

hands-on experiences and have an opportunity to apply their training in competitive events through the FFA. The \$33,000 and much more should be reinstated in the Governor's budget immediately! This money is wisely used as students participate in local, regional, state, and national contests.

As a secondary school teacher, I can see a bright future for our young people who are seeking new innovative careers. The agricultural industry supplies numerous opportunities for these new careers. Young people need to have the opportunity to be informed about these new opportunities which will allow the agricultural industry in Pennsylvania to get even better. I am an educator who is interested in making that commitment to the young people of our Commonwealth by giving them the information needed to make wise decisions and the right choices in preparing for their life's career. Is our Governor and the Pennsylvania Department of Edu-

cation willing to make the necessary decisions by expanding the agricultural education programs in our secondary schools by providing increased funding and additional full-time state staff personnel?

Doyle E. Paul
Agricultural Education Instructor
Berlin Brothersvalley School District
Somerset County

Editor:

In regard to the open letter to the Governor, one can hardly blame the Governor for trying to save money except this cut, when examined, closely is ounce sound and pound foolish. The taxpayer is getting more for his money in this expenditure than many other budget items. It is hard to imagine the impact of just what the FFA Foundation does for young folks of the rural communities of the Commonwealth.

What else is new? In 1941 the school board in the school where my father taught Vo-Ag said agriculture is no longer important in the community so why not drop

the department from the curriculum. That very day the announcement was made a Mr. Martin and Mr. Fetterolf from the State Department came to our home to help correct this mistake. With their help the department stayed open. There has been a lot of water over the dam since then, but it is my opinion the time to stand up and be counted is NOW. People from many walks of life are led to believe this is the trend so why fight it.

Having taught Vo-Ag for over 30 years, we have been told to get industry involved in the educational process. We, as a group of teachers, have worked hard at doing just this.

It is my wish to get Governor Casey to do the same with the various departments in the Pennsylvania government. I realize each department has its own personnel and each department has their specific little task to accomplish. Just think what might happen IF we could get the Departments of Edu-

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