

State Grangers Adopt Policies

CLARION (Clarion Co.) — Over 500 Pennsylvania State Grange members set new policy on the North American Free Trade Agreement, dedicated funding for agriculture, organ donation and a host of other issues during the 121st convention here.

The convention ran Oct. 24-28 at Clarion University and was hosted by Clarion and Venango counties.

"As a grassroots organization, the policies determined here will influence our legislative efforts on Capitol Hill as we work on legislation that will affect agriculture and rural Pennsylvania," Brenda Shambaugh, legislative director, said. "These issues are of greatest concern to our membership and the Pennsylvania State Grange will see that these policies are addressed at the state and federal level."

The Pennsylvania State Grange is asking National Grange to continue support for NAFTA with Canada and Mexico. In addition, the Pennsylvania State Grange requests that National Grange continue its efforts to assure that environmental, human health and other concerns of United States citizens are addressed in an equitable manner.

"The Pennsylvania State Grange is especially concerned

that the agricultural pesticide use and regulation, fruit and vegetable control and animal product quality regulations are comparable to current U.S. standards," Shambaugh said. "We feel if these concerns are met, then NAFTA will be beneficial to the agricultural industry."

The Grange seeks legislation that would enact a dedicated form of predictable funding for animal health research, indemnity programs, fruit and vegetable research, conservation and nutrient management implementation, the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, among others, and that this funding be combined with a tax fee on feed plus other general fund monies to address a funding deficit situation in Pennsylvania agriculture.

"It is important to have a stable budget and base for research projects that take more than one year," Shambaugh said. "This type of research not only has an impact on agriculture, but the consumer as well. It is imperative that we protect our number one industry as agriculture continues to deliver a wholesome product to the consumer."

The Grange is opposed to legislation that would put all labor under the same restrictive regulations as migrant labor and would

create regulations that would require written contracts, Department of Environmental Resources inspection of housing, water testing, guaranteed wages even if no work was performed, unemployment compensation and many more guidelines that would burden agriculture and small businesses.

"We are opposing legislation that would make it difficult for farmers to use migrant or seasonal labor to operate," Shambaugh said. "For example, there is one provision in proposed legislation that would require farmers to pay for labor whether or not farmers had a crop to harvest. No other industry requires workers to be compensated when no labor has been performed."

The Grange has a long-standing goal of advocating agriculture and conserving agricultural land and wishes to continue the protection of prime agricultural lands. The Grange also works for laws, programs, and procedures that would ensure that public lands are not routinely avoided at the expense of farm land when roads, railways, pipelines and power transmission lines, hazardous waste sites and low-level nuclear waste sites are located. The Grange passed a resolution that would empower the Agricultural Lands Condem-

nation Board to review and intervene when projects threaten valuable agricultural areas.

"The state of Pennsylvania needs to have an authority that will determine whether there are other valuable avenues other than prime agricultural lands," Shambaugh said. "This is another step toward protecting a valuable commodity."

Pennsylvania Grangers are urging National Grange to introduce and work for passage of the increased federal estate tax exemption. Currently, there are legislative efforts to reduce the current \$600,000 exemption to \$200,000, and tax currently non-taxable annuities and tax-exempt bonds.

"We feel an increased federal estate tax exemption is a more equitable means of taxing inheritances," Shambaugh said. "Large landowners, in particular, suffer severe economic impacts because of high inheritance taxes on their

property."

The Pennsylvania State Grange is concerned that pending legislation would create a presumption that all Pennsylvania residents will donate organs unless they indicate otherwise and adamantly opposes the Legislature passing laws that would require compulsory organ donation. The Grange supports maintaining a voluntary gift from organ donors.

"Pennsylvania State Grange does not believe in the idea that organs would be automatically donated if not otherwise designated," Shambaugh said. "Organ donation should remain a private and personal decision."

The Pennsylvania State Grange is a rural/agricultural organization dedicated to improving the lives of rural Pennsylvanians. There are over 35,000 members across the Commonwealth and 325,000 members across the United States who belong to the National Grange.

Greenhouse Seminar

WILKES-BARRE (Luzerne Co.) — The Northeast Greenhouse Seminar will be held Wednesday, November 10, at the Luzerne County Community College Conference Center, Nanticoke. The day's program will begin with registration at 9 a.m. and will conclude at 3 p.m.

Highlighting this year's program is Rick Malak, plant inspector Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA), Greenhouse Inspections; Lloyd Traven, Peace Tree Farm, Kintnersville, Pa.-New Guinea Impatiens; Kim Mill-

er, plant inspector, PDA, Current Greenhouse Insect & Disease Problems; Ben Martin, sales representative, Growers Greenhouse Supplies, Inc., Vineland Station, Ontario- Greenhouse Structures, Coverings and What's New.

The deadline to register is November 1. The cost for the day is \$10 per person, which includes coffee and donuts and lunch. For more information and/or a registration form, contact the Luzerne County Cooperative Extension, (717) 825-1701.

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