

## State Grange Host To State Legislature

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Lancaster Farming Staff  
**HARRISBURG** (Dauphin Co.) — An estimated 350 people participated in the annual Pennsylvania State Grange legislative banquet Monday evening at the Sheraton-East in Harrisburg.

The Pennsylvania State Grange is an organization representing rural communities throughout the state. Its membership is about 30,000 and it has affiliate groups in 66 of the state's 67 counties.

About 80 legislators had indicated they would attend the event, which seats legislators at tables with Grange members from the respective legislative districts. Even though the Legislature was in session, most all legislators who indicated they would, were able to attend.

The purpose of the banquet is to allow legislators and members an opportunity to discuss one-to-one the issues that currently affect rural life, such as opportunities and ideas that may help eliminate barriers to rural life goals, and ideas on possible solutions to existing problems.

Gordon Hiller, state master, presided over the banquet and received a proclamation from Gov. Tom Ridge, with the banquet presentation made by Chris Herr, Department of Agriculture deputy secretary, and Jane Brosius, for her husband, Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brosius.

Secretary Brosius also served as a speaker for one of the Grange's 12 pre-banquet workshops held at the hotel. For photographers, he presented the award to Hiller prior to the banquet.

Banquet speaker was Joy Dunbar, executive director of RULE, who talked about effective leadership, leadership styles, and developing leadership and motivational skills. She also talked about the role of the Grange in being a catal-

yst in helping people develop those skills.

Brenda Shambaugh, Grange legislative director, outlined Grange policy. The Grange annually develops policy through its membership.

Some of the issues included a proposed "rebalancing" of telephone rates by Bell Atlantic, that essentially would increase rural rates to lower city and urban rates in order to outcompete with smaller upstart companies offering lower service prices in target areas.

The Grange has been the leading rural and agricultural organization to challenge the proposal. (See April 27 issue of Lancaster Farming.)

"The Grange vehemently opposes any attempt to rebalance the pricing structure especially when the motivating factor is based on competition from other companies," Shambaugh said. "This proposed increase may have gone unnoticed if it had not been for the Grange."

In other issues, Shambaugh said the Grange supports local tax reform legislation (Senate Bill 2) that would require less reliance on property taxes and more emphasis on equal taxes, as well as providing more local control of how the tax formula is derived.

Shambaugh said the reason for more local control is because each political subdivision has its own unique mixture of taxable resources. A statewide forced reliance on taxing property doesn't allow communities to tap into their real assets, or to provide fairness according to ability to pay.

Shambaugh said getting such tax reform is key to empowering rural Pennsylvanians to escape the downspiral drain on local rural property owners whose income is derived from local business. In many areas such property tax reliance forces out local ownership



State Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brosius talks to members of the Pa. State Grange about changes in agriculture.

and creates incentives to sell property to development corporations.

"This measure (type of local tax reform) gives municipalities and school districts greater flexibility in levying taxes based on their own tax formula. In municipalities that design a new tax formula, voters could later veto any proposed property tax increase higher than the rate of economic growth of the area."

A 6½-cent per gallon gas tax proposed by Gov. Ridge to shore up funds for state road and bridge repairs to damage caused by this winter's storms and flood is also an issue. Shambaugh said that legislators should remember that existing state policy calls for a 3-cent gas tax and a 3-percent oil franchise tax to pay for damages.

She said that the Grange is pleased that state education reform is being addressed piecemeal instead of in a broadbrush manner, especially with recent tenure reform and with proposed sabbatical reform.

"Grange policy has advocated tenure reform for a number of years, and we were pleased to see that it was increased from two to three years," Shambaugh said. "However, Grange policy calls for teacher tenure to be tendered after five years of satisfactory teaching experience."

The proposed sabbatical reform would prohibit teachers from using sabbaticals for travel, early retirement or as severance pay, but it could be utilized for the purpose of study or for health. The Grange policy is reflected in the proposal.

The governor's state budget



From the left, state Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brosius presents a proclamation of state Grange Week to Gordon Hiller, president of the Pa. State Grange.

proposal also provides issues of contention for the Grange. Specifically, the Grange is seeking restoration of funding for the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine.

The proposed funding cut to the school was highlighted by a recent formation of a coalition of agricultural and public health-concerned organizations to educate legislators, the Ridge administration and others on the importance of funding the vet school.

As part of an attempt to reduce state spending, Ridge proposed a budget that reduces all spending except for prisons, which would receive a large increase.

The vet school however, is key to the state's agriculture and food processing industries' exporting attempts, as well as its competitive edge, and animal health (and related human health).

It is also important that the school has the lowest amount of state support among peer vet schools, depends heavily on research grants to pay staff, and has already reached the limit in funding from the university and other sources to maintain its reduced staff.

It also has one of the highest tuitions for instate students because of continued cuts of state support. Coalition members expressed disappointment in the lack of understanding of critical elements in the state's animal industry.

They further expressed disbelief that the proposal was made, in light of the fact that the coalition had previously formed under the administration of former-Gov. Robert Casey to successfully battle Casey's proposal to do the same thing.

During the coalition meeting, which the Grange supports, it was also announced that if state funding for the school goes through at the reduced level proposed — slashed by \$5.6 million — it will probably signal the end of what the president of the American Veterinary Association called the best vet school in the world.

"The public must realize that food safety and animal and human health work done at the New Bolton Center (a research center of the vet school) has a profound impact on our daily lives and that the negative ramifications of discontinuing this research goes far beyond agriculture," Shambaugh said.

"The budget that was proposed would also discontinue the student loan forgiveness programs for rural teachers and ag students who go back to rural areas. These programs were passed by the General Assembly to get college graduates back in rural areas."

In addition to those issues, Shambaugh said the Grange is currently working on legislation to create an agricultural specialty license plate, a returnable beverage container law, and to protect property owner rights.

She said the Grange has also been opposed to riverboat gambling.

The workshops were offered in three different tracks, depending on Grange member interest.

In addition to the presentation by state Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brosius, the political track included a presentation by Joseph Dudick, who is executive director of the Pa. Rural Development Council and also the governor's rural advisor. Dudick discussed

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From the left, Frances Hoffman, Freda Shreck and Agnes Wilson, of the Pa. State Grange Women's Activities Committee prepare milk punch for the 350 people attending the Grange's legislative banquet.

## Morrow, Hiller Seek Re-Election To Penn State Trustee Board

**STATE COLLEGE** (Centre Co.) — David Morrow, a dairy enthusiast, veterinarian, and educator, and Gordon Hiller, master of the Pennsylvania State Grange are seeking re-election to Penn State's board of trustees. Four Pennsylvania agricultural societies have endorsed Morrow and Hiller for re-election. They include PA Farm Bureau, PA State Grange, PA Holstein Association, and PA Council of Farm Organizations.

During his past three-year term, Morrow served as vice chair and chair of the physical plant committee, chair of the architectural selection committee, and was a member of both Research Park and Corporation boards, as well as a member



Dave Morrow

of the presidential selection committee.

Hiller in his past three-year term served on the environment committee and was named to the external advisory committee to the dean search process. He is the current overseer to New Bolton Center, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

Both men have extensive service to the University, The College of Agricultural Sciences, and the agricultural community. Both have received numerous awards for their many accomplishments.

The representatives from Pennsylvania agricultural societies will elect two members to the Penn State Board of Trustees on May 9.