

FEDERAL ISSUES

- POLICY STATEMENT -

More than one hundred forty years ago, the Grange came into being. Soon it was involved in legislation as issues facing rural America came to the forefront, such as malpractice by railroads, the trusts, and the birth of the Extension Service and formation of the Department of Agriculture.

Food and toy safety, debt reduction, health programs, Social Security, the environment and other issues continue to attract the attention of the Grange. The Grange, standing on its solid foundation built more than a century ago with its strong family and moral values, is in a position to influence solutions to these problems in a positive way.

Crime, terrorism, illegal immigration and national safety are of great concern to American citizens. The illegal use of drugs and human trafficking continue their adverse effects. Violence has entered into the educational system and penalties cannot be agreed upon. The cost of operating the penal system, homeland security and legal fees is skyrocketing. These issues are present challenges to Congress, and the Grange fully supports enforcement of current laws and/or reforms.

Job growth is needed to enable American workers to be competitive with other major industrial powers. The Grange also supports the Veteran's Employment Assistance Act.

Mandates issued by judicial proclamations, executive orders and legislative action must be curtailed.

The Grange understands the importance of protecting private lands from being taken over by eminent domain for the sole purpose of economic development.

A modern, well-kept and safe transportation system is essential to agriculture as well as the total economic system. The Grange believes in and strongly supports the dedicated highway fund. These funds should be protected against any "raiding" for budget balancing purposes. Attention to local roads and bridges is strongly supported by the New York State Grange.

The New York State Grange and its local units will continue to work with our Congressional delegation to speak for the good of rural America.

October 2011

AIRLINES/AVIATION

AIRLINE PASSENGER BILL OF RIGHTS

We support “passenger rights legislation” that would provide passengers aboard a flight that has been delayed from takeoff for more than one hour with electricity for fresh air and lights, adequate food and drinking water, and working toilets. (2008)

ASSAULT

SEXUAL ASSAULT FORENSICS EVIDENCE REGISTRY ACT OF 2010

We support the passage of the Sexual Assault Forensics Evidence Registry Act of 2010 in order to assist in the linkage, identification and prosecution of perpetrators of rape. (2011)

BANKING/FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

MANDATED ELECTRONIC BILLING AND PAYMENTS

We support empowering the newly created Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) to ban banks, mortgage lenders, credit card companies and any other consumer financial institutions from charging consumers fees for paper statements. (2010)

FEDERAL BAILOUT OF BANKING INDUSTRY

We support federal legislation/regulations to prevent the manipulation of U.S. financial institutions and support the investigation and prosecution of persons and entities that led to the collapse of these institutions. (2008)

BIO-TERRORISM

AGRICULTURAL BIOSECURITY

We urge federal legislators to pass legislation on the following: (1) increase investment in the Diagnostic Laboratories throughout the United States to ensure biosecurity for agriculture (2) increase penalties for bio-terrorism (3) increase funding for research into control and/or eradication of diseases that may be used by bio-terrorists to disrupt our food supply. (2008)

BUSINESS/LABOR RELATIONS

THE STOCK ACT

We support the passage of Legislative Bill #HR1148 (202nd Congress) or similar legislation to stop Congressional Representatives from Insider Trading with Congressional information which is available to them and the prosecution of those who continue to use Congressional information for Insider Trading. (2011)

ELIMINATION OF SELECT U.S. CURRENCY

We favor the continuation of the penny and dollar bill in U.S. currency. (2011)

COMPANY TAX EVASION

We request federal legislators to pass legislation that would make it illegal for a United States business licensed and chartered in the United States to have a post office box address located in an off shore country as the legal location of that business while the physical business is located in the United States (for the purpose of tax exempt status). (2008)

KEEPING AMERICA WORKING

We oppose the practice of businesses relocating to other countries for cheaper labor and operating costs and urge the United States Congress to do all in its power to encourage and assist businesses and manufacturing firms to remain in the United States, thereby retaining their jobs for American citizens. (2007)

CHILDREN

INEXPENSIVE CHILDREN'S JEWELRY CONTAINING CADMIUM

We support further legislation to stop the import of all jewelry and any other products from foreign countries that contain highly dangerous levels of cadmium. (2011)

IDENTITY THEFT

We support legislation that would allow children's Social Security numbers and other private information to be frozen by the child's legal custodian in the same manner as adults in order to protect them from identity theft. (2009)

CITIZENSHIP

NATIONAL ID CARD

We oppose the development of National ID Cards that electronically store personal information, such as fingerprints or tracking devices, or any attempt to modify existing driver's licenses by states to store electronic information. (2007)

CONSUMER ISSUES

COMPACT FLUORESCENT LIGHT (CFL) BULBS

We support reintroduction of legislation that would rescind the 2007 energy lighting efficiency regulation standards requiring the phase out of incandescent light bulbs in favor of compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) due to potential environmental hazards if not recycled properly due to the materials used in their manufacture, and that any changes in these regulations include the consumers' option to purchase the bulb that is the best form of lighting for them, meets with the energy conservation opinions and most economical for them. (2011)

TELEPHONE RECORDS

We support legislation that prohibits companies from selling an individual's private and/or cell phone numbers to telemarketers without the individual's consent. (2011)

TELEPHONE PRIVACY

We support legislation that would prohibit telephone companies from releasing personal account records to third parties except law enforcement agencies. (2011)

NO-MAIL LIST

We recommend enactment of legislation for a non-mail list for credit card companies similar to the no-call law for telemarketers. (2011)

ALCOHOL WARNING LABELS

We support the use of more prominent alcohol warning labels on all beer, wine and liquor containers. (2011)

TESTING OF NEW MEDICATION

We request the Food and Drug Administration review its protocol for the testing of new medications to ensure that possible side effects and drug interactions are discovered prior to releasing these new medications on the market. (2007)

ENERGY SAVING BULBS

We support action to educate consumers on the proper handling and disposal of energy saver bulbs and any items containing Mercury and, further, that the manufacturer's packaging include a hazardous sign and detailed information of the proper disposal of the bulbs and the retailer post the same hazardous information in their store. (2007)

ELECTED OFFICIALS

CONVICTED OF A FELONY

We support legislation that would require the immediate removal of any elected or appointed officials who have been convicted of a felony during their term of office. (2009)

ELECTIONS/VOTING/ CAMPAIGNS

ELECTION REFORM

We stand behind a National Election Standard showing proof against fraud, and ease of operations and clarity of results. Said standard would leave the exact methods to the various states as long as the standards are met. (2011)

ELECTORAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

We strongly support the continued use of the Electoral College system to elect the President of the United States and urge that any action on state and national levels to abolish the Electoral College be opposed by New York State Grange and the National Grange. (2011)

REFORM OF CAMPAIGN FINANCE LAWS

We support reforming campaign finance laws to include campaigns that are limited to 4 months prior to the primary and general elections. (2010)

PRIMARY ELECTIONS

We oppose cross party votes during a presidential primary election, further that there be one set date for a National Presidential Primary Election Day. (2010)

ENERGY/FUELS

FOSSIL FUELS

We support government investment in research conducted by the private and public sector that will lead to the development and implementation of alternative technologies that reduce dependence on fossil fuel products. (2010)

ESTABLISHMENT OF ETHANOL PLANTS

We are supportive of ethanol production in New York State. (2010)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

ENGLISH AS OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

We support English as the official language of the United States. (2011)

MULTILINGUAL SIGNS

We urge the NYS Legislature and the U.S. Congress to keep highway signs predominately in English only. (2010)

FEDERAL BUDGET/ GOVERNMENT

CONTINUITY OF GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

We support the solution for alternate provisions in the event of mass casualties in the House of Representatives. (2009)

FOOD

CHEESEBURGER BILL LAWSUITS

We oppose anyone bringing a lawsuit against the fast food industry claiming the fast food industry is responsible for the claimant's obesity. (2009)

FOOD & DRUG ADMINISTRATION RESPONSIBILITIES

We seek legislation that would focus the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) priorities on regulating and policing foods and drugs for human consumption and that some of the FDA's responsibilities be passed on to other departments such as Agriculture, Health and Homeland Security. (2008)

FOREIGN/INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

ENFORCEMENT OF IMMIGRATION LAWS

We support the federal government using money earmarked for lawsuits against the states they feel are in violation of the Supremacy Clause of the United States Constitution to properly enforce the existing Federal Immigration and Nationality Act to stop the influx of illegal immigrants. (2011)

ILLEGAL ALIENS

We urge the U.S. Government to have the immigration laws strictly enforced including the deportation of illegal aliens. (2010)

OCEAN SHIPPING LEGISLATION

We support legislation that would establish regulations requiring all shipping lines to change their ballast water in the open sea to curtail introduction of foreign species into our domestic waterways. (2010)

LAW OF THE SEA TREATY

We oppose ratification of the Law of the Sea Treaty which would give the United Nations control and jurisdiction over the world's bodies of water. (2009)

U.S. AGREEMENTS OR TREATIES WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

We strongly oppose the United States government getting involved with agreements or treaties with the United Nations or any other international body that takes away individual rights guaranteed under the Constitution or Bill of Rights or that imposes taxation on the citizens of the United States. (2009)

PROTECTION OF U.S. ECONOMY

We support review of Congress on all trade and tariff policies with a view of protection for American agriculture, industry and jobs. (2009)

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

We call on our elected officials to more closely monitor how the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other U.S. loans and grants to foreign countries are disbursed. (2009)

CONTROL OF PARKS BY UNITED NATIONS

We oppose the creation of Biosphere Reserves and any other action, which allows the control over the use of land in our country to the United Nations, or any international body. (2009)

IMMIGRATION POLICY-U.S./MEXICAN BORDER

We oppose the continued construction of the border fence between the United States and Mexico without first securing the funding and approval of Congress and to stop using waivers to fund the construction and to take the land. (2008)

We support more stringent patrols of the U.S./Mexican border. (2007)

LIMITS ON L-1 VISAS

We urge our federal legislators to pass legislation that would eliminate L-1 Visas. (2008)

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (NAFTA)

We support changes to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that will require Mexican trucks and truckers to meet the same regulations the U.S. trucks and truckers are required to meet. (2007)

KYOTO LEGISLATION

We do not support Kyoto Legislation or any other legislation that would put the United States under the jurisdiction of the United Nations. (2007)

GOVERNMENT FUNDING/ PROGRAMS

REPARATION PAYMENTS TO SLAVE DESCENDENTS

We urge our U.S. Senators and Representatives to refrain from passing legislation that would make the U.S. Government responsible for making reparation payments to descendents of slaves who worked in the United States. (2011)

MANDATE RELIEF

We call upon the President and Congress to enhance the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (Public Law 104-4) to fully fund Federal programs administered at the state and local levels. (2008)

GUN CONTROL/REGULATIONS

BOUNTY HUNTER REGULATIONS

We support the New York State Legislature and the U.S. Congress looking into the possibility of either outlawing bounty hunters or requiring them to meet all the standards that are required of police officers, correcting any deficiencies in the laws that could affect anyone's fundamental civil liberties. (2009)

HOMELAND SECURITY

ECOTERRORISTS

We favor legislation that would encourage the criminal justice system to prosecute ecoterrorists as violent criminals. (2011)

HOMELAND SECURITY FOR AGRICULTURE

We request the Office of Homeland Security investigate, monitor, and develop plans for prevention of and/or protection from acts of terrorism and destruction against agricultural producers, facilities of agricultural research, and major food processing and distribution centers. (2007)

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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We encourage more aggressive enforcement of existing Human Trafficking Laws, and further recommend that Grange members should use resources to educate themselves and others about the dangers of human trafficking. (2010)

MISCELLANEOUS

ANTIQUA/VINTAGE CARS

We oppose any Federal Scrapage legislation which will require the scrapping of vehicles over 15 years old. (2007)

NATIVE AMERICANS

INDIAN LAND CLAIMS

We recommend the Federal Government ratify any and all treaties relating to Indian lands, and failing in their duty to do so, assume full responsibility for any monetary settlement through the courts to the Indian Nation with no inclusion of land. Any land to be purchased, should be only from willing sellers with the same taxes and benefits accorded all residential or business owners. (2009)

We recommend that the federal government ratify any and all treaties relating to Indian lands. (2008)

We urge our Congress to ratify any treaties in question with the Iroquois Confederacy, to enact a statute of limitations of not more than 40 years which will apply to the Federal Government and

the Indian Nations, and to provide just compensation to the Indian Nations for an inadequacy in the payment they received when the land was sold to New York State. (2008)

NUCLEAR WASTE

TRANSPORTATION OF NUCLEAR WASTE

We oppose the shipment of all grades of nuclear waste excluding low level medical radioactive waste on the St. Lawrence Seaway and to the importation of nuclear waste from foreign countries. (2010)

PARKS

RESTORING THE MOJAVE DESERT VETERANS MEMORIAL CROSS

We support legislation that would direct the National Park Service and the Department of Justice to immediately restore the Mojave Desert Veterans Memorial Cross. (2010)

NATIONAL PARK FEES

We support legislation that would allow the federal government to charge fees for the use of the National Parks for producing movies, videos, ads and commercials with the income to be used to maintain and make improvements to the National Parks and Monuments. (2010)

POSTAL SERVICE

POSTAL SERVICE CLOSING

We urge the United States Postal Service to proceed with caution in relation to the proposed Post Office closures, taking into consideration the special needs of the community as well as the statistical analysis developed for closure criteria. (2011)

SATURDAY MAIL SERVICE

We oppose the elimination of Saturday mail delivery by the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). (2010)

POSTAL RATE INCREASES

We request that the appointed directors of the U.S. Postal Service be responsible in the management of these funds to keep the cost of postage within the means of those at the lowest level of incomes. (2009)

PRAYER/PATRIOTISM/FREEDOMS

REMOVAL OF “GOD” FROM PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & CURRENCY

We object to the removal of “One Nation under God” from the pledge of allegiance and “In God We Trust” from our United States currency. (2009)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE IN THE U.S. SENATE

We believe that the members of the U.S. Senate should recite the Pledge of Allegiance out of respect for those who have fought for and in many cases died for the benefits that the Constitution of the United States has guaranteed for all the citizens of the United States. (2009)

PATRIOT ACT

We urge the federal government to amend those parts of the Patriot Act which infringes on U.S. civil liberties and civil rights. (2008)

PROPERTY OWNERS’ RIGHTS

LIMITATION OF EMINENT DOMAIN

We support the passage of legislation to protect private lands from being taken over by eminent domain for the sole purpose of greater economic revenue. (2011)

We urge the U.S. Congress to pass legislation which will give property owners some protection for the expanded scope of eminent domain procedures. (2010)

SOCIAL SECURITY/ PENSION PLANS

SOCIAL SECURITY FUNDS

We strongly support that any monies in the Social Security fund be used only for Social Security purposes. They should not be used by other agencies/departments or be put in a general fund to help balance the budget. (2011)

FRAUDULENT USE OF SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

We support legislation that would help stop the unauthorized sale of Social Security numbers and increasing the penalties for fraud that involves the use of another person’s Social Security number. (2010)

SOCIAL SECURITY “NOTCH” SETTLEMENT

We support the “Notch Fairness Acts” to compensate “Notch Victims” (born 1917 – 1926) with an immediate \$5,000 settlement plus monthly compensation based on a post notch formula. (2010)

SAFEGUARDING SOCIAL SECURITY

We support that top priority be given to ensure continued funding of Social Security, sufficient for future generations, and without drastically increasing the eligibility age. (2009)

TELEVISION/ENTERTAINMENT

RFD-TV

We request that National Grange send a congratulatory letter to the RFD-TV network on the occasion of their 10th anniversary with deep appreciation for their coverage of U.S. agriculture and topics of rural interests. (2011)

TELEVISION, ENTERTAINMENT & RADIO VIOLATIONS

We support substantial increases in penalties for Federal Communication Commission violations in the transmission of obscene, indecent and profane language and images by television and radio broadcasters. (2009)

TELEVISION/DVD PLAYERS IN VEHICLES

We oppose the placement of any visual entertainment device in a vehicle within the driver’s area of vision. (2009)

TOYS

COLOR OF TOY WEAPONS

We recommend that toy retailers do not sell toy weapons with the appearance of a real weapon. (2011)

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY

We support passage of legislation that will exempt U.S. Artisan-made toys and homemade articles from third party testing as required by the Consumer Products Safety Improvement Act of 2008. (2009)

SAFETY LAW

We support rescinding the exemption from third-party testing given to Mattel by the Consumer Products Safety Commission and supports requiring all companies comply to the full extent of the law, setting strict limits for lead, lead paint and chemicals known as phthalates, and the mandatory third party testing of products geared for children 12 and under. (2009)

TOY SAFETY

We support legislative action to require toys sold in the United States, whether made in the United States or off-shore, be inspected to U.S. safety standards by the sponsoring company at the site of assembly for any safety hazards, including type of paint and liquids being used in making the toys. (2008)

TRANSPORTATION/ROADS

OPPOSITION TO A NATIONAL SPEED LIMIT

We oppose a national speed limit and oppose commissioning a study to determine the optimal speed limit, and we favor energy-saving options including:

- Use of public transportation
- Promotion of car pooling
- Better enforcement of current speed limits
- Promotion of alternative fuel development (2008)

WESTERN NEW YORK & PENNSYLVANIA CORRIDOR

We request the New York Department of Transportation make a feasibility study for the Western New York and Pennsylvania Corridor (Routes 60 and 62 connecting with I-86) and that funds to make this a more effective road system be provided by State and Federal funds as soon as possible. (2008)

U. S. MADE

UNITED STATES MADE SOUVENIRS

We urge the National Parks Service and other National entities such as the Smithsonian Institution to purchase souvenirs, clothing, etc. made in the United States for resale in their gift shops rather than buying items from foreign markets for resale. (2011)

VEHICLES

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE (ATV) INJURIES

We support a renewed effort be made by public health officials, the all-terrain vehicle industry and the United States Consumer Protection Safety Commission to work with individual states to increase helmet use through a combination of stricter policy enforcement and better education to help in the reduction of ATV injuries by children younger than 18. (2011)

VETERANS'/MILITARY ISSUES

DESIGNATION OF "TAPS" AS THE NATIONAL SONG OF REMEMBRANCE

We support legislation that would designate the bugle call commonly known as "Taps", consisting of 24 notes sounded on a bugle or trumpet, performed by a solo bugler or trumpeter, without accompaniment or embellishment, as the National Song of Remembrance. (2011)

SUPPORT FOR THE MEMBERS OF OUR ARMED FORCES

We voice support to the men and women in the armed forces and to their families for their dedication and sacrifices. (2011)

MILITARY ELECTION BALLOTS

We support development of a mechanism for counting all military absentee ballots. (2011)

VETERANS' DAY OBSERVANCE

We oppose any legislation that would change Veterans' Day to Election Day. (2011)

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE ACT

We support the enactment of the proposed Veterans Employment Assistance Act (S3234), or similar legislation, to provide our returning veterans with an opportunity for jobs, training and higher education. (2010)

PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS

We support legislation that requires the Veterans Administration to pay benefits to in-country Vietnam veterans effective the first day of the month that the veteran was diagnosed with the service connected presumptive condition. (2009)

PROSTATE CANCER

We support legislation that would require the Veterans Administration to pay Title 38 VA Compensation Benefits to veterans having prostate cancer surgery, effective the date of said surgery rather than the date the veteran files a claim. (2009)

SELECTIVE SERVICE

We support retention of the Selective Service System. (2009)

PROSECUTION OF GRAVE DEFILERS

We support legislation to make it a Federal offense to defile the grave of any service member, regardless of where the grave is located. (2008)

FORFEITED RETIREMENT FOR DISABLED VETERANS

We support legislation that repeals the law which reduces the retirement benefits of disabled veterans by the amount they receive in disability pay. (2008)

WATER

CLEAN WATER ACT

We urge federal legislators to pass legislation that would amend the regulations of the Clean Water Act, to limit the powers of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of Environmental Protection Agency over inland waters and wetland, thus preserving States and individual rights. (2008)