

Connecticut State Grange

LEGISLATIVE POLICY GUIDE



2024

This 2024 issue of the Connecticut State Grange Legislative Policies is the statement of the Grange on legislative issues confronting the rural, urban and suburban segments of Connecticut’s population.

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INTRODUCTION

The legislative objective of the Connecticut State Grange is to support the interests of both rural and suburban Connecticut at the local and state levels of government. The Grange bases its legislative posture on over 137 years of continuous concern for the problems of rural, urban and suburban communities in a rapidly changing economic and social environment.

The Grange legislative policies originate from its members. Members propose ideas that are the basis of resolutions that are passed on from the Community Granges. These resolutions are then introduced to the State Grange delegates for consideration.

The Grange is very protective of its non-partisanship in the public forum. The Grange uses this positive force in its approach to legislative matters and in the discussions of Grange legislative positions.

The Grange's emphasis is supporting the interests of the agricultural community, maintaining prime farmlands in Connecticut, protecting the environment and local communities, maintaining a safe infrastructure and transportation network in the state, and recognizing citizen rights.

The Grange throughout the United States continues to be the voice of our rural, urban and suburban citizens. The Grange supports policies and programs that allow each individual to pursue their interests with a minimum of restrictions while at the same time protecting the interests of the general public as consumers to ensure they are offered quality products at fair prices in a truly competitive economy.

AGRICULTURE

The Grange continues to support a strong agricultural community and related businesses. Connecticut's agricultural industry contributes \$3.4 billion in revenue annually to our economy and provides 28,000 jobs in Connecticut.

Land Use

The Grange supports existing legislation which prevents local zoning and planning commissions from having the authority to impose fees and restrictions on temporary protective structures for agricultural purposes.

The Grange continues to support establishment of local agricultural commissions empowered to give advice to other town boards.

Community Gardens

The Grange encourages each municipality to provide free plots of land for community gardens and provide assistance in developing these plots.

Licenses and Permits

The Grange encourages designating the Department of Agriculture to be responsible for handling all necessary state licenses and permits for farmers.

Agricultural Research

The Grange continues to support the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in New Haven, which includes the Lockwood Farm in Hamden and the Valley Laboratory in Windsor, and opposes any major budget cuts to these facilities.

The Grange continues to support an efficient College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Connecticut.

Definition of MILK

Milk is defined as fluid secreted by the mammary glands of females for nourishment of their young. Several companies are now using the term milk as a description of their plant and/or nut-based beverage. The Grange urges the General Assembly to introduce and pass legislation prohibiting the sale of any plant and/or nut-based beverages as "milk".

Utility Rates

The Grange urges the General Assembly to prohibit utility companies from charging commercial rates to family farms.

Crop Damage

The Grange asks the General Assembly to add wild turkeys to the species which may be taken under crop damage permits.

Funding for Livestock

The Grange supports the re-funding of animal health inspections at all fairs held within the State of Connecticut.

Meat and Milk Processing Plants

Whereas there is a shortage of Meat processing plants, which has a six-month backlog in butcher time, and surplus milk which has been dumped due to limited milk processing plants. The Grange urges the Connecticut Department of Agriculture to investigate and implement a plan to add more meat and milk Processing plants in the state to better serve local farmers.

Animal Abuse

The Grange asks the General Assembly to enact stricter penalties and enforcement of animal abuse regulations for persons found to be abusing animals.

Housing of Poultry

The Grange urges the General Assembly to appropriate sufficient funding to complete the research on what would be the most humane way to house all species of poultry in a manner that would allow the farmer to make a fair profit for his investment and labor.

Restraining Animals in Motor Vehicles

The Grange urges the General Assembly to pass legislation restraining animals in transport to prevent them from interfering with the driver, such as sitting on the driver's lap, while the vehicle is in motion.

Rural Road Signs

The Grange supports legislation encouraging increased use of fixed and mobile rural road signs that warn of tractors or other slow-moving farm equipment.

Exemption of Mileage Tax for Agricultural Vehicles

The Grange urges our legislators to add vehicles for production and support of agricultural production in the state to be exempted from the Truck Mileage Tax.

Milk Market Pricing Subsidy

The Grange urges our legislators to support the cost production for each region into the makeup of the new Milk Marketing Subsidy Plan, so that our local dairy farmers are all on an equal parity in milk pricing for milk production and quality.

Whole Milk in School Lunches

The Grange supports legislation bringing the whole milk choice back to the schools.

USDA EMERGENCY FARM AID

The Grange urges our legislators to have all farmers equal access to USDA emergency funds, for large, small, and minority farms.

FARM VIABILITY

Support for Local and Family Farms

The Grange endorses full support for local farms no matter how small with policies and principals such as:

Economic Support, with equal access to open fair markets and credit and capital.

Environmental Stewardship, with full and equitable access to programs such as disaster relief and new incentives to reduce use of chemicals, protect clean water, and improve soil.

Public Health, with produce that are sold largely as unprocessed and qualify currently for SNAP incentives at local farmers markets, and all Connecticut Grown products, qualifying year-round for the same incentives in local supermarkets.

Farmland Preservation

The preservation of prime farmland is essential to Connecticut's agriculture industry. Much has been accomplished in this area, but we are still irretrievably losing approximately eight acres to development for every acre that is preserved. The Department of Agriculture needs to be adequately staffed to handle the State's farmland preservation program. This includes not only the appraisals, negotiations and administrative work but also the closings which are currently handled by the Office of the Attorney General.

The Grange is pleased to note that the State Constitution will now mandate public hearings before any State-owned land is sold or any

farmland preservation easement held by the State is released. We would now like to see a similar Constitutional amendment to protect State-owned farmland from being converted to other uses.

The State of Connecticut owns much farmland which should be preserved and maintained in active crop production.

Community Investment Act (PA 05-228)

The Grange supports the original intent of the Community Investment Act to provide funding for the preservation of farmland, open space, historic preservation and affordable housing. The Federal Farm Bill contains significant reductions in grant funds available for programs and projects funded in part or in whole by the Community Investment Act. With less federal funding available it is essential that the Community Investment Act funds be restricted to their original purposes and not diverted to the State's General Fund.

Bond Funds

The Grange supports bond fund authorizations and lump sum appropriations to enable the Department of Agriculture to purchase the development rights to prime agricultural land. This process has proven its worth in recent years by increasing the number of farms where development rights were purchased.

One of the existing problems is that the Department of Agriculture does not have enough staff to use the existing bond authorizations in a reasonable amount of time. We encourage the hiring of additional staff for the farmland preservation program so the currently available funds can be utilized within a reasonable time and before the fee owners of the farmland sell it on the open market.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture and other organizations in Connecticut are receiving only a small fraction of the federal funds routinely received when approvals could be granted by the USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Services state offices. It is therefore more essential than ever before that State bond funds be made available for farmland preservation.

Other Organizations

The Grange supports the efforts of municipalities, local land trusts and the Connecticut Farmland Trust to assist the State in preserving agricultural land throughout Connecticut.

Agricultural Businesses

Connecticut's agriculture industry provides 28,000 permanent jobs. The Grange encourages the State to include agriculture in various programs to create more jobs for low- and moderate-income wage earners.

Many people want to purchase or start new farms today but lack the necessary skills and/or financial backing to accomplish their objectives. At the same time many consumers want fresh locally-grown food products. The Grange therefore supports programs to help new farmers get started to satisfy both of these groups.

Agritourism

Agritourism has become popular in Connecticut and provides an additional source of income to our farm operations. However, many towns have not addressed a definition of "agritourism" in their zoning regulations and have forced the shutdown of tourism operations due to a lack of understanding by the local zoning board. The Grange recommends that this confusion be eliminated by passing a definition of "agritourism" based on the recommendation of the National Agricultural Law Center which states that any definition of "agritourism" should include that it combines elements of the tourism and agricultural industries; attracts members of the public to visit agricultural operations; provides recreation, entertainment, and/or educational experiences for visitors; and may increase farm income.

Financial Solvency of Farms

Low-Interest Loans

The State and the municipalities provide incentives to attract various businesses to locate in Connecticut. The Grange urges the General Assembly to authorize a low-interest loan program to enable farmers to borrow funds to keep their farms solvent.

Farm Debt

Natural disasters occasionally destroy farmers' crops and lands. As a result, farmers are often forced to file for bankruptcy or sell their farms to meet their financial obligations, resulting in the loss of farmland. The Grange urges the General Assembly to authorize a program to postpone the repayment of farm debts following a natural disaster.

Farm Succession

Upon the death of a farm principal, high estate and succession taxes impose a burdensome financial drain on the heirs to the point where,

in many cases, the farm is forced to go out of business permanently. The Grange seeks to resolve this problem through financial relief where needed.

Inheritance Tax Step-up Basis

The Grange is opposed to any change in the current Step-up in basis provision in the capital gains section of Federal Inheritance Tax law.

The Grange urges financial relief to heirs upon the death of a farm principal.

CONSERVATION AND ECOLOGY

The Grange supports a strong and viable Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. We urge the Governor and General Assembly to restore the budget and authorize the hiring of sufficient personnel to enable the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to fulfill its mission of protecting and preserving the quality of the environment and natural resources and providing opportunities for outdoor recreation throughout Connecticut.

Open Space

490 Program

The Grange supports the right of the local community to be given the right of first refusal of land that has been designated open space under the "490 Program" when the owner of said land decides to place it on the market at a later date.

Open Space Easement

The Connecticut State Grange believes that open space easements given to or purchased by land trusts for preservation purposes should be protected from takings by the towns through eminent domain when the purpose of the taking is to allow private development.

Connecticut Valley National Heritage Corridor

The Grange is in support of establishing a Connecticut Valley National Heritage Corridor within the National Park Service in recognition of the unique geology of the trap-rock landscapes which exist along the Connecticut Valley.

Public Lands and Forests

The Grange urges that State policies regarding public forests prioritize and maximize:

- Public health and safety, quiet reflection, enjoyment of

- nature, and a sense of wildness;
- long-term ecosystem integrity and economic services;
- restoration and protection of natural old forests and old growth ecological characteristics, by protecting old-growth and older forests with a suitable buffer;
- periodic long-term monitoring by a team of suitable scientific professionals.

The Grange urges no unnecessary disturbance of core forest, old growth forest, headwaters, wetlands and vernal pools on land owned by the State to ensure these public assets best serve the long-term public good of clean water, carbon sequestration, flood mitigation, and protection of full native biodiversity. The Grange urges that proposed disturbance be brought before a public hearing for review.

Pesticides, Herbicides and Fertilizers

Farmers' Liability

The Grange supports legislation that will relieve the farmer from liability for use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers that were used in government-approved applications.

Education

The Grange urges the development of educational programs and literature to inform and educate the public concerning the dangers of using pesticides, herbicides and synthetic fertilizers, particularly in excess of recommended amounts.

Invasive Species

Education and Eradication

The Grange urges the Connecticut General Assembly to enact and support comprehensive policies throughout relevant State agencies that educate the public on invasive species and supports broad-based efforts toward early identification and eradication of land-based and water-based invasive species.

Sales

The Grange urges the Connecticut General Assembly to increase funding to the Department of Energy and Environment and Protection specifically earmarked for enforcement of laws banning sale of invasive plant species. We urge that significant monetary fines or penalties to be imposed on any business which is found to have such plants for sale. We recommend that all businesses selling plants receive and

be required to acknowledge receipt of a list of invasive plant species along with a copy of the state law forbidding the sale of such plants.

Nuisance Wildlife

Based on increased reports of interactions with wildlife the Grange urges DEEP to mobilize clear public education on:

- factors that create nuisance wildlife;
- behavior and the role of keystone native wildlife species in the ecological integrity of the landscape;
- proven ways to prevent and deter nuisance wildlife, including black bears,
- limitations on bird feeders to March – September, and intentional feedings

The Grange urges that policies be established to enable fines levied to any entity that is attracting nuisance wildlife, to study and implement procedures to control the black bear population and its interaction with people, and consider a pilot bear-hunting season limited to Litchfield county.

ENERGY

Replenishable Energy

We reaffirm our encouragement of developing replenishable fuels and solar energy; and developing hydroelectric sources of electricity in and for Connecticut.

Fuel Efficiency

The Grange supports legislation that would raise the standard for gasoline consumption to at least 45 miles per gallon for passenger cars and to at least 34 miles per gallon for sport utility vehicles and light trucks. Both for reasons of fuel efficiency and because ethanol at present requires more energy per gallon to produce than the energy actually contained in each gallon therein, the Grange opposes selling gasoline containing a higher percentage of ethanol than the present E-10.

Energy siting and distributed energy

The Grange urges our legislators to encourage the installation of solar panels along Connecticut multi-lane highways as a revenue venture and a farmland/forestry preservation effort.

The Grange supports maximal incentives for energy efficiency, on-site energy, and appropriately sited community-based projects that

make our communities across the state more resilient, reduce energy loss associated with grid-based transmission, and reduce negative impacts of renewable energy projects on ecosystem services provided by natural land.

Subsidies for Solar Energy

The Grange encourages the use of natural resources such as water, solar and wind for generating clean energy. The Grange endorses and promotes the continuation of Federal and State subsidies for home and business generation of solar energy.

Utility Rate Increases

The Connecticut State Grange urges the General Assembly to pass legislation instructing the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority to never allow an increase in utility charges either for generation or delivery, that exceeds 10% of the utility portion of the standard cost of living for that given year.

SAFETY

School Bus Safety

School busses transport millions of children daily to and from school. It is estimated that millions of drivers are ignoring the stopped bus stop signs and passing these busses illegally placing our students at risk of injury. The Grange supports installing cameras on the stop arms of the school busses to record the motorists illegally passing the busses and act as another tool in enforcing the law against passing a stopped school bus.

Doubling Fines when Minor Child in the Car

Connecticut has established laws and fines concerning driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs or while texting. There have been occurrences when the driver has minor children in the car when the driver is stopped for one of these infringements. The Grange urges the Connecticut General Assembly to double the fines of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs or texting while driving when there is a minor child in the vehicle at the time of the arrest.

DUI Penalties (Driving while Impaired)

The Grange urges that the present DUI laws in Connecticut be strengthened by increasing the time for mandatory Ignition Interlock systems after the second offense and considering lifetime previous offenses, not just offenses during the previous 10 years when sentencing. We also urge improving the system of reciprocity between states for sharing information on these offenses.

Texting While Driving

Texting while driving is responsible for approximately 3,000 deaths a year nationwide as well as multiple injuries. Connecticut has already recognized this and has imposed fines for texting while operating a motor vehicle. The Grange feels that texting while driving should be considered as reckless driving and encourages the General Assembly to strengthen its present laws to a definition of reckless driving, citing that it endangers others and is a conscious disregard/indifference to others.

Minimum speed limits on highways

Drivers using our Interstate highways are not always accelerating to the speed of other vehicles on the highway, creating a hazard to themselves and to other vehicles. The Grange recommends that, in those areas where the posted maximum speed is 65 miles per hour, the minimum speed should be increased to 50 miles per hour.

Traffic Safety

Traffic safety is a concern when one or more persons are directing traffic along our roads. A pole sign showing STOP/SLOW would be more visible for drivers when passing through areas where traffic is being controlled over just using hands to indicate traffic movement. The Grange encourages legislation requiring pole signs saying STOP and SLOW to be used by all directing traffic.

Pedestrian Crosswalks

The Grange recommends that both state and local traffic authorities mark additional crosswalks in high pedestrian traffic areas and place warning signs for both motorists and pedestrians near buildings that children frequent, such as schools, libraries and community centers. We urge a strong enforcement of the use of crosswalks in these areas to reduce the rising number of pedestrian accidents.

The Grange requests the Connecticut Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration to establish and promulgate standards for the minimum walk-light time, type of visual image, and audible sound levels for all controlled crosswalks.

Bicycle Safety

- Rear View Mirrors for Bicycles

A rear-view mirror on the bicycle or on the bicyclist's helmet would allow the bicyclist to see traffic approaching from the rear. The Grange recommends the use of rear-view mirrors

by bicyclists who ride our local and state roads.

- Bicycle Safety on Rural Roads

The Grange encourages state and local agencies to develop a campaign to educate the public on safer bicycle driving practices and techniques and bicycle safety awareness for both motor vehicles operators and bicycle riders.

Vehicle Safety Inspections

The Grange urges the General Assembly to adopt legislation making vehicle safety inspection mandatory on vehicles five years or older and inspected every five years to ensure that the vehicle is safe to operate on the highways.

Motor Homes

The Grange supports specific operator license categories for motor homes and travel trailers, taking into account the various sizes and weights of these vehicles.

Safety in the Workplace

The Grange urges increased enforcement of and educational programs concerning safety in the workplace, with an emphasis on farm safety, as farming is second only to mining as the most hazardous occupation in the United States.

Regulation of Billboard Advertising

The Grange supports stronger regulation of billboard advertising so that what is written is legible from a greater distance and limit the distractions of flashing lights or changing screens.

EDUCATION

ECS Formulas

The Grange supports the establishment of a Blue-Ribbon Commission, created by the General Assembly, to do an in-depth study of the Educational Cost-Sharing Formula to guarantee a more favorable minimum amount per student for each city and town.

Agricultural Education

Considering the success of the Agriscience School program, despite inadequate funding, the Grange encourages the General Assembly to restore to 95% the State reimbursement grants given to host school districts for cost of Agriscience programs and to reduce the gap

between what the State pays for technical school and the Agriscience schools with a suggested target of 50% of the tuition paid by the sending towns. We also urge greater State assistance in adequate training and recruitment of new ag-science teachers to meet the unfulfilled demand of students wanting to attend Agriscience schools.

Basic Agricultural Education for Elementary and Middle School

The Grange supports the establishment of programs inserted into existing elementary and middle school curricula which would teach about the agricultural production of plant and animal food.

Connecticut Technical Schools

The Grange supports the continuation of the State-Run Technical High School system as it currently exists, and strongly opposes the closing of vocational/technical schools that has been proposed as a means of budget cuts.

Board of Regents

The Grange desires that the General Assembly mandate that the membership of the Board of Regents for Higher Education more closely reflect its own regulations in which it is stated that: "The board shall reflect the state's geographic, racial and ethnic diversity". At present there is a lack of geographic diversity on the board.

School Lunch Programs

The Grange supports school lunch programs and, in those geographic areas where needed, school breakfast programs.

The Grange supports local farm-to-school lunch programs to ensure that children have ample fresh local food in their diets.

The Grange supports efforts to increase the sale of dairy products in the school lunch program including the reinstatement of whole milk and the sale of flavored milk.

After School Programs

The Grange supports after-school programs which will enhance the total educational experience by encouraging students to pursue self-directed education, motivated by their natural curiosity.

Special Needs Funding

The Grange urges the General Assembly to relieve the financial burden on towns of State-mandated special education programs that are outside the normal school curriculum by providing state funding for them.

English as Official Language

The Grange continues to urge the General Assembly to declare English as the official language of the state. At the same time, we encourage multilingual capability.

Deaf and Hearing-Impaired Children

The Grange urges that deaf and hearing-impaired children be provided with an education in which teachers and all other personnel understand the unique nature of challenges associated with deafness and are specifically trained to work with deaf and hearing-impaired children. We further urge that teachers and all others who have frequent contact with hearing impaired children be fluent in American Sign Language (ASL).

Grange Hall Dormitory Roof Replacement

The Grange urges our legislators to support the University of Connecticut in the repairs or replacement of the slate roofs on the historic Grange and Hicks Dormitories at the Storrs Campus, to prevent further water damage to these buildings.

Student Loans Correction

The Grange urges Congress to repair the Student Loan System to ensure students have fair access to Bankruptcy laws to protect them from student debt.

JUSTICE

Fraud

Fraud in Public Assistance Programs

Fraud is known to exist in the various public assistance programs. We urge the legislature to mandate a standard system of identification for all public assistance programs to minimize this fraud.

Medicare Fraud

The Grange supports significant financial penalties for Medicare fraud and the establishment of procedures to assist in funding the Medicare fraud investigation unit. The Grange urges that all healthcare providers who defraud the Medicare system be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Elder Abuse

It is reported that 26% of all fraud is committed against the elder population. The Grange supports increasing the penalties for crimes involving elder fraud and abuse as well as broadening the definition of 'elder abuse'.

Protection of Property Owners

The Grange has long held the belief that everyone should be able to make the greatest legal use of their property with the minimum restrictions and intrusions by all levels of government. The Grange believes that all people should be responsible for their own actions. The Grange urges legislation to protect property owners from liability claims by trespassers.

Hate Crimes against Homeless

The Grange supports legislation to add homeless to the hate-crime reporting and enforcement as homeless persons find themselves the target of violent crimes.

Prosecution of Juveniles

The Grange urges the enforcement of prosecuting juveniles as adults when they commit felonies.

Death Penalty

The Grange supports the repeal of the current “Life Imprisonment without Parole” and to reinstate the sentence of Death for those heinous crimes previously covered under the old Death Penalty.

TAXATION AND BUDGET

Federal Tax

The Grange urges the General Assembly to petition the United States Congress to correct an inequity in the federal tax code and allow both state income and sales taxes to be deducted for federal tax purposes.

490 Program

The Grange continues to support the “490 Program” requiring municipalities to assess farm, forest and open space land for its value in use rather than its highest and best use value.

Native American Land Tax

The Grange urges legislation mandating that taxes on land purchased by Native American tribes remain on the tax rolls.

Sales Tax on Clothing and Shoes

The Grange encourages restoring the tax exemption on purchases of clothing and shoes.

Alternative Funding

The Grange urges the General Assembly to search for alternative sources of income in order to decrease the excessive reliance by towns on property taxes as their primary source of income.

Tax exemption for certain Agricultural Products

The Grange urges the General Assembly to re-establish the tax exemption on those agricultural products that were exempt from Connecticut Sales Tax before the changes of 1991, especially sales tax on livestock, feed for livestock, and seed and fertilizer for agricultural crops.

Sales Tax on Live Game Birds

The Grange requests the General Assembly to exempt live pheasants and other game birds from the sales tax because these birds are usually released into the wild.

Motor Vehicle Property Taxes

The Grange urges the Connecticut General Assembly to keep the local property tax on motor vehicles unless an equitable new funding method is developed for towns to derive equivalent revenue.

TRANSPORTATION

Improvement of Interstate Highways

The Grange supports the much-needed improvements to interstate highways, making them safer to travel.

Mass Transit

The Grange supports the concept of mass transit which reduces congestion on highways and reduces environmental pollutants.

Effects of Construction on the Environment

The Grange supports the requirements that the Department of Transportation give priority consideration to the effects of proposed construction on the environment on any highway construction. It recommends that this consideration be extended to both agricultural land and production.

Truck Weigh Stations

The Grange urges that existing weigh stations along highways be open for both weight and inspection on a regular basis.

License plate visibility

The State of Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles requires front and rear facing license plates on cars and trucks. Many rear

plates are covered with dealer’s advertisement and tinted covers to avoid photo detection, thus making it difficult to read the license plate. The Grange urges the Department of Motor Vehicle to explore the possibility of increasing the fines for the offense and promoting methods to enforce existing law.

Enforcement of out of state registration violations

The Grange encourages stricter enforcement of the \$1,000.00 fine for failure to register vehicles in the State of Connecticut within 60 days and encourage the State of Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles to work with other States to improve communication and information sharing between the states to improve compliance with state laws.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Medicare Coverage in Convalescent Homes

The Grange supports the “Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act” or similar legislation to ease financial burdens on Medicare patients. This Act or similar has bipartisan support and will ensure 1) access to Medicare coverage and 2) mandate Medicare payments after transitioning from hospital care, including from an “observational period” at the hospital.

Health Insurance

The Grange urges legislation for insurance coverage for hearing aids through Medicare and Medicaid systems.

The Grange urges legislation to recognize teeth as a legitimate part of the body, requiring the same level of care and coverage as other parts of the body by health insurers including dentures, implants, crowns, and bridgework. Dentists should be treated the same as other medical specialists by both the government and insurance carriers and be compensated at the same rate.

Children Welfare

The Grange supports and encourages all efforts to change the way courts handle visitation and protection orders to encompass the welfare of all children within each home and to provide the necessary time to heal before any possibility of resuming contact with the offending parent.

Drug Addiction

The Grange supports all efforts to provide encouragement to

develop regional approaches to combat heroin and opiate addiction in Connecticut.

Healthcare Employees

The Grange urges legislation requiring at least 75 hours of training for home healthcare aides.

The Grange urges the passage of legislation requiring that both healthcare employees and prospective employees be screened for illegal drugs and misuse of legal drugs. Employees within these systems should be random tested every six months by their employer.

Handicapped Accessibility in Buildings

Often entrances into medical and other buildings, identified as handicapped accessible, have items restricting the passage of wheelchairs, blocking handicapped buttons and back entrances. The Grange urges officials in charge of medical buildings, hotels and inns listed as handicapped accessible to enforce handicapped accessibility regulations. We urge that all hotels and inns place handicapped accessible rooms on the first floor.

Limiting use of Animals in Testing

The Grange urges legislation to limit the use of small animals for testing by pharmaceutical, cosmetic, and detergent industries.

Dog Licensing

The Grange urges the General Assembly to keep annual dog licensing so rabies protection can be successfully monitored.

Banning Declawing (Onychectomy) of Cats

The Grange urges legislation into banning the inhumane practice of onychectomy (Feline digital amputation), partial or complete phalangectomy (removal to toes) or tendonectomy (removal of tendons) on a cat except when medically necessary. Failure to comply to be punished by a sizable fine.

Flavored Vaping Products & Menthol Cigarettes & Cigars

The Grange urges the Connecticut General Assembly to pass legislation mirroring recent legislation in our neighbor states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New York in banning the sale of flavored products for e-cigarettes and menthol cigarettes and cigars.

Lyme Disease

The Grange encourages legislation requiring insurance companies to

pay for Lyme disease diagnosis and treatment in such a manner equal to other diseases and conditions.

Q-Fever Disease

The Grange urges the State Health Department and the CDC, to be alert for Q- Fever, a bacterial infection transferred from bodily fluids of goats, sheep, and cows found in birthing fluids. Granger and dairy farmer Russell Gray recently passed away following infection from Q-Fever.

Healthcare Security

The Grange urges legislation requiring all healthcare providers and medical companies to tighten security measures protecting the safety of healthcare and health records and that strict penalties be put in place for negligence and non-compliance.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND RIGHTS

Security for Seniors

The Grange encourages legislation to provide improved supervision and security to our senior citizens especially in subsidized housing complexes.

RoboCalls

Unsolicited robocalls, which are often scams or fraudulent in nature, are being received by many of us. There is technology and equipment available to stop these types of calls.

The Grange supports legislation to require telecommunication companies operating in Connecticut to either install and use this technology or assist their customers in acquiring and installing the technology and equipment available to stop these robocalls. We also urge the Federal Communication Commission to require that all communication service providers supply an identifying name on all calls.

Cable Television Assistance

The Grange requests that legislation be drafted requiring providers of Cable Television service to have customer support staff who are able to speak and communicate clearly with callers needing assistance.

Made in America

The Grange supports a definition of "Made in America" to mean all parts of a product have been fabricated and assembled within

the United States. When components are manufactured in foreign countries for final assembly in the United States, the Grange recommends the item be labeled as “Assembled in the U.S.A. from Foreign Parts.”

Handicapped Parking

The Grange supports stronger penalties for violations of handicapped parking regulations and stricter enforcement of existing laws. We also encourage that handicapped parking spots be kept clear of debris and snow.

Territorial rating on Auto Insurance

Currently people living in highly populated areas are paying higher rates due to their added accident exposure. The Grange favors the continuation of territorial ratings.

Home Addresses

The Grange supports legislation limiting the release of home addresses by State Agencies.

Bankruptcy and Severance Pay for Employees

The Grange supports legislation making severance pay mandatory for all employees with ten or more years of service with any company declaring bankruptcy.

Uninsured Motorists

The Grange recommends that the Department of Motor Vehicles be empowered to seize and impound uninsured motor vehicles until the owner secures insurance coverage meeting the statutory minimum requirements.

Universal Designs for Consumer Products

The Grange encourages manufacturers of food and health products to apply concepts of universal design for packaging and labeling to make the opening of the containers less stressful and make labeling on the containers and directions for use more readable without magnification.

Styrofoam (Expanded Polystyrene)

The Connecticut State Grange urges the Connecticut General Assembly to pass legislation eliminating the use of single-serve expanded polystyrene (Styrofoam) food and beverage service packaging in this state.

Credit Card Surcharges and Convenience Fees

Connecticut adds a surcharge or convenience fee when people pay obligations to the State and allows municipalities to do the same when people pay taxes and other obligations to the municipalities by credit card. The Grange therefore urges the Connecticut General Assembly to eliminate surcharges and convenience fees levied when payments to the State and municipalities are made by means of a credit cards.

Increase number of Bottle Recycling Centers

The Grange urges our legislators to develop a plan to increase the number of bottle recycling centers, to help with group recycling needs.

LEGISLATION

Funding of Public Works, Highways and Bridges

- The condition of public works, highways and bridges throughout our nation has deteriorated to the point where many are of critical concern for both safety and capacity. Funds such as taxes, tolls and admissions generated by the use of these public works projects, have often been diverted into the State General Fund and then appropriated for purposes other than those for which they were originally intended. The Grange opposes the diversion of funds from their original intended purposes and urges the General Assembly to restore income from all funds and programs to their original intended uses.
- The Grange urges that all revenues collected from fuel taxes be returned to the transportation fund for improving our states highways before considering reintroducing tolls on major state highways.

Town Funding

The Grange supports legislation that would require that the formula for distribution of the Education Cost Sharing Grant, Special Education Grant and Town Aid Road Grant be approved by May 15th of each year even if the State Budget has not been passed. In the event that the State budget had not been finalized by this deadline, the funding for these grants be set the same as in the previous year plus three percent.

Corporate Migration Crisis

The Grange encourages the General Assembly to make it a high priority to determine what needs to be done to make the state more attractive to new businesses coming in and encouraging those that

are here to stay and thrive here, and then implement the changes needed.

Notice of Public Meetings

Notices of public meetings have been published in the newspapers ever since newspapers became generally available to the public. Recently, municipalities have proposed eliminating of these public notices as a means to save money, claiming that notices may now be given by posting them on the municipality's web site. The Grange agrees that all public notices may be posted on the municipality's web site at virtually no cost, but there are still many people who do not have access to a computer where they can take the time to read these notices. The Grange therefore opposes the elimination of notices of public meetings being posted in the local newspapers.

English as Primary Language on Ballots

The Grange encourages printing only English on voting ballots as that is the predominant language in Connecticut.

Campaign Limits for Federal Political Offices

Connecticut's limits on the time and money allowed for political campaigns for state offices work well. The Grange believes similar limits on the time and funding for campaigns for federal offices should be established. The Grange, being nonpartisan, encourages the General Assembly to urge the Congress to establish legislation limiting the time and money allowed for political campaigns for federal offices using Connecticut's existing legislation as a guide.

Congressional Term Limits

The Grange supports term limits for our House and Senate members of the federal government so that a member of Congress can serve for no more than 12 years in either position during their lifetime.

Recall of State Officials

Elected officials at all levels of government need to set an outstanding level of honesty and integrity in all phases of their lives while holding public office. Under current law, there is no process for recalling an elected official until the end of their term when they may be voted out of office. The Grange urges the General Assembly to establish a process, if necessary, by an amendment to the State constitution, whereby any elected public official may be recalled and replaced when they fail to uphold the honesty and integrity of their office.

Senatorial Mid-Term Vacancies

The Grange supports passage of an amendment to the United States Constitution which would require Senatorial mid-term vacancies to be filled by special elections instead of appointments.

Germane Amendments on Bills

The Grange urges limits on amendments accepted on the floor of the Senate and House to matters that are closely related to the original bill and which will not change the original intent of the proposed legislation.

The Grange is pleased to note that under the new amendment to the State Constitution all bills authorizing the sale of State real estate or the release of State held easements must deal only with that particular matter and may not be attached to bills on other matters or have other matters attached to the authorization to sell State real estate or release State held easements.

Emergency Executive Powers

The Grange encourages passage of legislation to modify the Emergency Powers Act to limit the length of time of the act to three months unless the Legislature meets again to extend the time after the three-month period ends. This would ensure maintaining a balance of power between the two branches of government.

Connecticut Trash Problem

The Grange urges the State Legislatures to appoint a Blue Ribbon Commission comprise of legislative leaders and industry experts for solutions to Connecticut's trash problems and to alleviate financial and environmental burdens on residents and municipalities.

Emergency Executive Powers

The Grange encourages passage of legislation to modify the Emergency Powers Act to limit the length of time of the act to three months unless the Legislature meets again to extend the time after the three-month period ends. This would ensure maintaining a balance of power between the two branches of government.

Connecticut State Grange

a part of the National Grange



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