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**THEME: Agricultural Education in
the Political Process**

THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MAGAZINE



June, 1987

Volume 59

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ARTICLE SUBMISSION

Articles and photographs should be submitted to the Editor, Regional Editors, or Special Editors. Items to be considered for publication should be submitted at least 90 days prior to the date of issue intended for the article or photograph. All submissions will be acknowledged by the Editor. No items are returned unless accompanied by a written request. Articles should be typed, double-spaced, and include information about the author(s). Two copies of articles should be submitted. A recent photograph should accompany an article unless one is on file with the Editor.

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Political Involvement and Professional Integrity

Politics and the democratic process are as American as fatherhood and apple pie. And to perpetuate our form of government, elementary schools introduce students to ideas such as voting, electing club officers, levying membership dues (taxes), and related topics. Interestingly enough, most of these civics lessons focus on individuals, not groups.

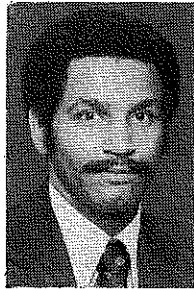
But, when the children of America become gainfully employed and start rearing other good Americans, the democratic process goes through a metamorphosis. At this age, problems seemingly are more complex, sometimes divisive, and quite expensive. This usually means positions become hardened and problems have a contemporary flavor. Self-interest predominates. Local and state problems overshadow national or international concerns because they hit closer to home and "the pocketbook."

As self-interest rises, so does the number of conflicts over (a) public policies and (b) the processes to manage the conflicts. Thomas R. Dye refers to this as simply politics (*POLITICS IN STATES AND COMMUNITIES*, Prentice-Hall, 1981). Dye says, "Obstacles to the solution of these problems are primarily political in character" (p. 1). According to Dye, the political dimension surfaces because citizens have multiple solutions for the same problem. Even when a solution is reached, Dye contends that political questions again surface when that solution is implemented. This political scientist says politics and political questions must exist out of necessity in a democratic society.

Being Politically Active

For agricultural educators (and most public employees), a nagging question concerns how deeply to be involved in the political process. Heretofore, most political involvement by agricultural educators has been quiet and behind-the-scenes. Letters to legislators from agricultural educators as individual citizens, a few office visits, a rare telephone call, and limited volunteering to distribute leaflets, posters, and campaign fodder will probably describe the involvement of most in the profession.

From a group perspective, many vocational agriculture and FFA activities have very subtle political overtones. Good public relations activities such as banquets, legislative breakfasts, honorary degrees, good teaching, tours, use of the mass media, and other strategies create a wholesome image that is often translated into favorable legislation. Such "safe" political maneuvering has served the profession well. But, as society's problems become more complex, political involvement is acquiring new meaning.



BY BLANNIE E. BOWEN, EDITOR

(Dr. Bowen is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education at The Ohio State University.)

The Best Money Can Buy

A host of activities vie for politicians' time and ears. They know that attending an FFA banquet cannot reach as many voters as a slick 30-second television spot shown during the evening news. Thus, the human touch frequently gives way to glossy images created by high-powered (and expensive) advertising agencies. They watch the CPV Index (Cost Per Vote) like it's the stock market. Unbelievably, such packaging works. But, to get a piece of the action, new strategies must be tried.

Start with a lobbyist who can negotiate the bureaucratic maze. Next, form a PAC or Political Action Committee to raise the dollars. For example, in the 1984 U.S. Senate races, 11 of the 15 highest money raisers got elected. Jim Hunt raised \$10.1 million, but lost to Jesse Helms (R-NC) who raised a cool \$16.5 million. Lloyd Doggett's coffer reached a paltry \$6.1 million only to have him lose to Phil Gramm's (R-TX) \$9.8 million. In only two of the 15 races did the loser raise more than the winner (Shamie in Massachusetts and Percy in Illinois). All except Shamie accepted healthy PAC contributions. Jay Rockefeller's (D-WV) PAC gift of \$533,000 was the lowest; Gramm's \$1.3 million the highest. PACs generating the most dollars included conservative groups, medical associations, educational organizations, milk producers, home builders, et al. (See *THE WORLD ALMANAC AND BOOK OF FACTS*, 1986, p. 249, for details).

A Role for Professional Organizations

When one examines the U.S. political system, questions must be raised about the role of professional organizations. Can lobbyists and PACs best represent the interests of a profession? Have winning candidates always been the best money could buy? Should professional publications disseminate overtly political messages? Should professional groups endorse candidates? Are there alternatives to courses now being charted?

(Continued on page 4)

Political Involvement and Professional Integrity

(Continued from page 3)

Agricultural education will survive or die in a political environment. Thus, the profession should not pretend that politics does not influence agricultural education. How-

ever, souls of the profession should not be sold for a few quick victories. Elusive elements of professional integrity and trust shall be lost if compromised for political expediency.

This issue examines agricultural education and the political process. Woody Cox, the theme editor, is to be commended for attacking this often cursed, but vitally needed topic.

THEME

"Grassroots Lobbying" is Not a Dirty Word

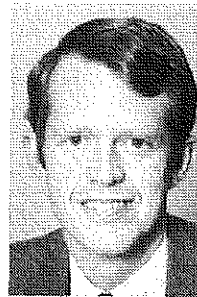
Our governmental affairs involvement is important to vocational education in agriculture. We know that decisions by governmental leaders have impacted vocational agriculture programs both positively and negatively. I can cite cases within the last two years where we have influenced decisions through governmental affairs activities.

Do you know of a school board that has considered closing a vocational agriculture department? Have you heard that increased graduation requirements are causing scheduling problems for students wanting to enroll in vocational agriculture? Have you heard that many key political leaders are recommending the elimination of secondary vocational education? Did you know that the President's budget calls for the elimination of all federal vocational education funds in 1988? These issues are current and each requires political involvement if vocational agriculture is to continue to meet the needs of persons interested in careers in the agricultural industry.

History

In 1906 the vocational education movement at the federal level began with the organization of the "National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education." This society developed growing support for industrial education and secured federal aid for the program. The influence of this society and the growing need for vocational education resulted in the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917. The vocational agriculture program area received approximately 40 percent of the funds and was of vital importance in the legislation. In 1929 the George-Reed Act authorized supplemental funds to the Smith-Hughes Act, giving 42 percent to agriculture. The George-Barden Act in 1946 greatly expanded the federal funding levels and occupational areas of vocational education. The next major historical legislation was the Vocational Education Act of 1963. This Act greatly broadened the purposes of vocational education and broadened vocational agriculture to include agribusiness. Our last federal legislation was the Carl Perkins Bill in 1985. This legislation places emphasis on program improvement and special interest areas.

We have seen vocational agriculture education move from receiving a major portion of funds to presently being grouped with many other occupational areas and receiving no designated funds. Vocational agriculture was funded



By ROBERT W. COX, THEME EDITOR

(Mr. Cox is Executive Director of the National FFA Alumni Association, P.O. Box 15058, Alexandria, Virginia 22309.)

primarily by federal dollars in the early years. Today, less than nine percent of vocational education dollars are from the federal government, and they are restricted to special interest areas or program improvement.

Future

Governmental affairs efforts must be strong at the local, state, and national levels. With more funding and program decisions occurring at the local and state levels, the increasing need for more activity at these levels has resulted. This will continue to grow over the next 10 years. Strong community support groups such as the FFA Alumni are becoming increasingly important.

The keys to effective governmental affairs are: understanding the political process, developing an on going quality public relations program with political leaders, and developing a system for vocational agriculture issues to be communicated. The authors of this issue will further develop each of these areas. Today is the time to expel the feeling that governmental affairs and lobbying are dirty areas and start developing a strong governmental affairs and grassroots lobbying effort for vocational education in agriculture.

About the Cover

In July, 1986, the FFA Alumni Council met with Senator Robert Dole (R-KS) and other influential leaders during visits to the U.S. Capitol. Senator Dole (left) has been a major supporter of the alumni and vocational agriculture for a number of years. (Photo courtesy of Woody Cox).

Politics and the Fence Rider

"Politics!" George Fencerider nearly spit out the word. "That's what's wrong with this country these days. I'm proud to say I've never been involved and certainly don't intend to become so now — nothing personal against you of course." George was talking to John Reishower, an owner of a small garden store and member of a local group interested in promoting agricultural education in the community.

"But George, you've said yourself that we need to expand our ag program to include a greenhouse and to service other ag related occupations," replied John, somewhat taken aback by George's outburst. "We aren't trying to stage a rebellion; just generate some public support for the ag program."

"Well do what you like, but don't expect me to get involved. I don't think the public school system has any business in politics. It would be nice to get a new facility like the one at Madison, however. I just wish that ol' school board wasn't so stubborn," George muttered as he busied himself with some papers on his desk.

"Maybe it's not just the school board," John replied as he left, shaking his head.

"Huh — what was that?" George asked. "Oh well," George thought. "John's a nice guy, but he ought to know I have better things to do than make speeches to civic groups — I have a department to run. Things aren't getting any easier either," George muttered. Why, my cousin Joe Scatterscrew's department was closed just last year and I've been losin' students right and left. I've got enough to tend to right now."

George once had a thriving vocational agriculture program. It had been started by a school board and administration with a keen sense of commitment to all the students in the community. George was only the second teacher in the program, and when he took over from Karen Goegiter it was considered one of the best in the state. John Reishower had been a member of Karen's advisory committee — his name was still on the books — but George hadn't scheduled a meeting for over a year. "After all," George reasoned, "I know what makes a good ag program. Those advisory councils are just extra work dreamed up by those meddling state department bureaucrats."

Misconceptions About Politics

George Fencerider's aversion to politics is not unusual, nor even completely unjustified. Politics has often become synonymous with backstabbing, selfishness, self-aggrandizement, negativism, endless campaigning and empty promises. Getting involved in the political process is often viewed as taking the low road and as something to be done only as a last resort. So why does our good ol' *Ag Ed Magazine* decide to devote an entire issue to this sordid topic? *Why indeed! As old George Fencerider would say,*



By MICHAEL G. RUSH

(Dr. Rush is a State Supervisor of Agricultural Education for the State Division of Vocational Education, 650 West State Street, Room 315, Boise, Idaho 83720.)

"Ag Education should mind its own business and leave politics to those with nothin' better to do."

Maybe so George. I know I've felt exactly the same way. First, however, I would like to look at three issues: Does political involvement work? Are there other options? What is appropriate political involvement for agricultural educators?

Does Involvement Work?

Agricultural educators are pragmatists - sometimes painfully so. If political involvement does not or will not work, agricultural educators are not likely to get involved, no matter how noble the cause or impassioned the plea. The facts are that teachers use the political process all of the time in a variety of ways to maintain class discipline, convince students to participate in the FFA, obtain community support for the program, and yes, even to muster support for state and federal legislation.

The local advisory council hasn't survived for 70 years simply to help teachers modify curriculum — it has served as a valuable political tool, providing community ownership in the agricultural program. Many examples abound of local advisory committees going to bat for vocational agriculture and turning back efforts (which are also political) to scale down or eliminate programs. Political involvement on the state level has been no less impressive.

States such as Arkansas, Mississippi, Kentucky, Illinois, California, Utah, Arizona, Oklahoma, Ohio, South Carolina, and others have passed significant legislation addressing vocational or agricultural education. This legislation was a direct result of the involvement of agricultural teachers in the political process.

The most graphic example of the power of political involvement, however, has been at the federal level. Vocational education was a significant departure from the educational philosophy of the public school in the early 20th century. It has since become a significant part of that system. The reason: people who thought education for work was important, and who were willing to make the political effort to pass federal legislation. In the latest renewal of federal vocational legislation, vocational educators were able to garner the most federal money ever.

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Politics and the Fence Rider

(Continued from page 5)

Not bad considering President Ronald Reagan had proposed eliminating funding entirely and the Senate's conservative educational leadership had serious qualms about the federal role in vocational education. I'd say, Mr. Fence-rider, that there is no question on this one: political involvement works!

Other Options

The next question, however, is just as important: Are there other options to "getting our hands dirty with politics?" Isn't agricultural education a serious educational activity that should remain politically neutral and on the political sidelines?

There are other options. Teachers in the Soviet Union do not generally take an active role in promoting alternative educational options. Agricultural educators do not maintain a very high profile in Libya or Cuba or Romania. Teachers in these countries and, in fact, most countries of the world don't need to concern themselves with political lobbying. The decisions are made by someone else, and input from special interests is not welcome. In our system of government, however, politics is the process by which resources are allocated and social priorities determined. If those with a vested interest in agricultural education are not involved in the process, then those with different interests and priorities will determine the federal, state, and local educational agendas. Remember, the democratic process does not guarantee the right or best decisions. It simply guarantees that people who want to can participate in determining those decisions. Agricultural education will not remain a part of our educational system simply because it is valuable (although that is a necessary precondition). It will remain because those involved in the decision making process decide it is more valuable than other competing interests. George - I think we'll have to answer this second question in the negative. Involvement in the political process is the only option if agricultural education wants to remain a part of our educational system.

Appropriate Involvement

I think George Fencerider knew all along that political involvement was important for agricultural educators. There's still the problem, however, of the negative image and uneasy feeling politics leaves with most of us. We are teachers, first and foremost, and we do teach all students who come in the door - Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians, and New York Giant fans alike. Thus, the third question we need to answer: What is appropriate political involvement for agricultural educators? Most people are like George. They either won't, can't, or don't know how to participate in the political process. Politics, however, is not a demented, cultist activity (although there are a few politicians who seem to want it that way). The key to the political process is simply providing the right kind of information from enough of the right people to those who make the decisions. Providing the right kind of information can take a variety of forms. It may be as simple as a conversation or as complicated as a political campaign. Other articles in this issue will deal with the specifics of the political



Public relations should not overlook cooperating educational leaders. Here State FFA officers meet with Dr. Larry Selland, former director of Vocational Education, and Jerry Evans, State Superintendent of Public Instruction. (Photo courtesy of Mike Rush).

process on the three governmental levels. The following are general observations that are true of the political process in general - at the local, state, or national level.

The key to providing the right kind of information centers around the local agricultural teacher. There is simply no substitute in the political process for a good local program. Just as political apathy may kill a good program, no amount of political activity can ultimately save a program that is not meeting a social need. Therefore programs must keep up-to-date and teachers must constantly stay aware of student, community, and industry needs. Once a good program is in place, it must also be perceived by the public as being good. Enter public relations. The program benefits and successes must be constantly presented to the critical public: administrators, school boards, parents, students, industry, and political leaders. Political involvement isn't something that you do and complete. It is an ongoing process that must become an integral part of the agricultural education profession - at all levels.

Agricultural educators must also reach out to others who are sympathetic to agricultural education. Farm organizations, the Extension Service, industry personnel, and the FFA Alumni can all be valuable allies in promoting the profession. Remember, however, that these people have their own jobs and priorities and the ones who will do you the most good will also be the busiest.

Successful involvement in the political process also requires that agricultural educators pay attention to competing priorities for the available resources. For instance, support for a program is much more likely if it can be demonstrated that while meeting the traditional goals of agricultural education, the program will also decrease the dropout rate, reduce unemployment in the local area, serve as a showplace for the school, or provide direct services to adults in the community. Agricultural educators must also recognize legitimate competing interests and be willing to compromise when practical to accommodate those interests.

In Summary

Finally, we must recognize that agricultural education will continue to be impacted through the political process whether we are involved in that process or not. Sometimes we may not like what others think we should do with the program. In some cases, we may have to make major changes to win the political support necessary to exist. For the most part, this is healthy for agricultural education. It is much too easy to grow complacent, lax, out-of-date, and inefficient. Constant public scrutiny and the need to compete for resources force us to keep our programs tuned to the needs of our society. We shouldn't want it any other way. On the other hand, our involvement guarantees that our ideas will provide central guidance to any final solution.

George Fencerider picked up the local newspaper from



Idaho State FFA officers meet with former Lieutenant Governor David Leroy during Governmental Goodwill Tour. (Photo courtesy of Mike Rush).

his desk. On the front page a prominent lawyer was shaking hands with the new chorus director at the high school. George remembered that the school had proposed closing the chorus program the year before, but that a few interested individuals had organized enough community support to change the board's decision. Just then the phone rang.

"George. This is Mr. Cutprincipal. I think you and I should get together before the next board meeting. They asked me to recommend ways to save money and well . . . Stop by sometime tomorrow."

"You know," George thought to himself, "perhaps I've been too quick to judge ol' John Reishower. He might just be on the right track after all. Maybe I'll give him a call one of these days."

I'd suggest tonight, George.



Idaho State FFA officers present Secretary of State Pete Cenarrusa with a thank-you during Governmental Goodwill Tour. (Photo courtesy of Mike Rush).

BOOK REVIEW

ENGINES — COMPACT EQUIPMENT: FUNDAMENTALS OF SERVICE (FOS) by the Editorial Staff, Fundamental Writing Service, John Deere Technical Services, Moline, Illinois: Deere & Company, 1982.

This is one of the manuals in the FOS series covering compact equipment systems. This one is on the topic of Engines. The other three manuals are for Electrical Systems, Hydraulics, and Power Trains. Also available for each manual is a Teacher's Guide, Student Workbook and a 35 mm color slide set.

This manual covers engines rated up to 40 PTO horsepower and includes both gasoline (2 and 4 cycle) and diesel

engines below that power limit. This manual discusses engines commonly found on equipment such as chain saws, weed trimmers, lawn mowers, riding mowers, lawn and garden tractors, compact utility tractors, and skid-steer loaders.

The manual is divided into two parts. Part 1 covers components and operation of 2- and 4-cycle engines and includes chapters on Introduction To Engines, Basic 4-Cycle Engine, Basic 2-Cycle Engine, and Gasoline and Diesel Fuel Systems. Part 2 covers engine disassembly, parts inspection, repair, adjustment, and diagnosis with chapters on Servicing the 4-Cycle Engine, Servicing the 2-Cycle Engine, Servicing the Gasoline and Diesel Fuel

System, Servicing the Cooling System, Servicing the Lubricating System, and Diagnosis and Troubleshooting. At the end of each chapter there is a Review. The manual has hundreds of excellent illustrations, several of which are in color, and scores of photographs.

This manual would be an excellent text for students in high school, trade school, or technical school. The manual helps one to gain a greater understanding of the test and repair procedures for engines on compact equipment.

Donald L. Siefker
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The Role of Vocational Agriculture Instructors in the Political Process

As a local vocational agriculture instructor, what is your role in the political process? Thirty-six years ago when I joined the ranks of the local vocational agriculture instructors, this question would not have been posed to me. If, by chance, some inquisitive person would have asked the question pertaining to my role in the political process, the answer would have been anticipated. The programmed answer would have carefully explained my role of service to the community and to the school system. Certainly, being actively or even remotely involved in the political process was not an approved activity for any teacher in the local school system.

How well I remember my first state agriculture teachers conferences in those early years of teaching. The final sessions always ended with the highly motivational speech from the head state supervisor challenging us for the year just beginning. Included in these remarks were the statements that, "Men, we had a rough year, but we won. Legislation was tough this year, but we got our money. I went to the hill and talked to the right people." As a young teacher driving home, I visualized the "hill" as a mountain; a far, distant territory where I was not allowed to tread. I gained the impression the "hill" was far removed from my world but the men who invaded the "hill" were men of courage and truly had my best interest at heart. I could only imagine "the right people" occupied the smoke-filled rooms behind closed doors and they were not accessible to me. I remember I was grateful for the system and knew I could go home and teach for another year. Several years of my teaching career passed before I came to the realization that I had voted for those closed-door occupants and some even came from my community. I now realize I was involved in the political process as a non-participant and my lack of activity closely correlates with my benefits as a teacher.

Teachers and the Political Process

I remember well my next plateau in the political process because it involved the combination of two processes developing simultaneously, namely; the attempts of teachers with their first entry level into the political process and the expectation of teachers for their professional organization to greatly influence the political decision makers of the period. It was in the early seventies when the teachers began to express their discontent with the status quo, when they asked to become involved in establishing school policies, curriculum development, textbook selection, class size, and the myriad of decisions that had previously been handed to them by elected and selected decision makers. School boards and often communities viewed this early activity of teachers asserting their influence as having militant overtones. Effects of these early



BY ELDON E. WITT

(Mr. Witt is the Executive Secretary of the Illinois FFA and Executive Director of the Illinois Association of Vo-Ag Teachers, 204 Husseman Street, Box 466, Roanoke, Illinois 61561.)

confrontations were instrumental in the development of local organizational policies that work in the gray area bordering professional and non-professional organizations.

As teachers became frustrated with militant interpretation of their efforts to influence the decision makers, they quickly turned to their professional organizations to echo their desires. Many organizations wished to remain true to their professional beginnings and resisted the call to influence legislation by means other than truly educational and professional. Many individuals became frustrated with this philosophy and removed their membership, thus creating even less opportunity for the professional organization to exert necessary and sufficient influence in the political process.

The Role of Professional Organizations

And now, I am well into the decade of the eighties, nearly completed my 36th year of agricultural education as a career and definitely entering my third stage of involvement in the political process. It is clearly evident that many mistakes have been made during this cycle. Most of the errors have occurred on either end of the spectrum - from one role of passive acceptance to the extreme of dominant insistence. I have seen the role of the state supervisor change drastically from a role of dominant influence to one of passive consultant services. At the same time, the role of the teacher educator became more limited in influence. There is less travel to supervise student teachers and less supervision of first year teachers. Limited out-of-state travel has had a definite bearing on the role of the supervisor and the teacher educator. But throughout this role change, there is one organization that is limited only by the imagination of its members and that is the professional organization.

The professional organization has the freedom to travel where it wishes, to conduct informational surveys as it wishes, to advise and consult members as it wishes. The professional organization must assume the leadership role when necessary to provide the individual members with



President Reagan discussing agricultural issues during the Illinois State Fair August 12, 1986. (Photo courtesy of the author).

the services so dearly needed. But, when the chips start to fall, it is the individual teacher who is in the classroom every day, day after day, who will assure that quality education will be maintained in the classroom. The individual teacher has the most to gain or lose from the legislative process be it local, state, or national.

The contact with which he or she maintains a close relationship is the professional organization — the organization to which he or she pays dues, is involved in the decision making of its policies, looks to for legislative changes, can call on in a short notice. To those teachers, the professional organization is their voice. It only stands to reason that if the professional organization demands quality education, then the professional teacher will strive for quality education. The professional organization has the structure and representation to spearhead agricultural education legislation. Professional educators, as members of these organizations, must be ready and willing to assume this much needed leadership.

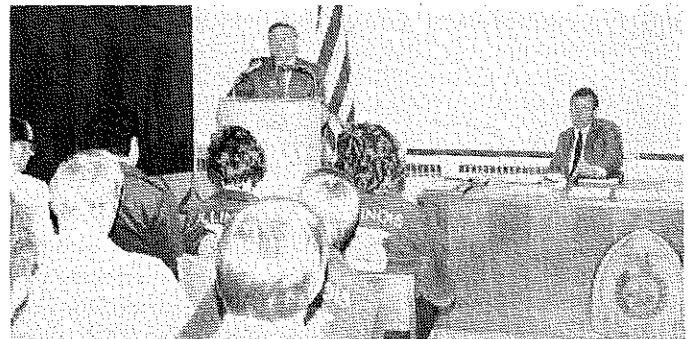
Professional organizations do play an important role in representing the interests of agricultural education. Such representation is expected by legislators. It must be realized that individual members have unlimited influence and a real concern stated by a local constituent is of vital interest to legislators. To be a major influence on elected officials, a vocational agriculture teacher must be aware of the legislative process, be informed of legislation that has been introduced, and know addresses and telephone numbers of legislators. If, as a teacher, you want to make an impact on the educational scene, you must believe in what you are doing. You are the person most qualified to talk about agricultural education; it is too important an issue to leave to others. You must be a person of conviction. You must believe in what you are doing. You must believe it is important enough and that current conditions are serious enough that you become involved in the political process to exert an influence on those who have the power to change conditions so education can be improved.

If support for education is not at the level you think it should be, then let us, as teachers, have the courage to do something about our convictions. We have a great political system that belongs to all of us. It can be a means of achieving our goals and objectives, but we must be a part of it as an individual and as a member of a professional organization. To be a part or not to be a part of the legislative process involves attitudes, and attitudes are the most difficult to change. No change of any consequence will occur unless attitude related to the political process is changed.

The Local Teacher's Role

Quality education depends upon the local teacher. Membership in organizations depends upon the local teacher. The local teacher is the key to any successful or unsuccessful program occurring within the educational scene. It is time for teachers to reach an understanding of their role in the political process and professionally exert their influence.

Lying within each community across this nation is a sleeping giant — a giant comprised of alumni and concerned citizens that can be awakened by the concerned teacher. Teachers can inform the public, write letters, invite legislators to their classrooms, testify at public hearings, organize alumni chapters, and do a myriad of professional activities that can exert an influence in the legislative process. The need is now and I suggest we look for less dependency on others and "get on" with our task.



Illinois Representative Gordon Ropp (at podium) and Senator John Maitland (at table), discussing legislative issues at State FFA Alumni Convention January 25, 1986. (Ropp is State and National Chairman of Vocational Education Councils). (Photo courtesy of the author).



Governor James Thompson presenting Richard Dunn, agriculture instructor, Seneca, the Governor's Plaque as State winner in the "Excellence in Teaching" Competition. (Photo courtesy of the author).

The Importance of Strengthening Political Involvement at the State Level

The INFORMATION AGE has helped usher in a change in the makeup of our national population. Today our population is generally two, three, or more generations away from direct contact with production agriculture. The same trend is present in the makeup of the legislative body at the state level. As the number of agriculturally-oriented legislators has declined, our political strength has decreased accordingly. The legislators are not our enemies, but some are our uninformed friends. Most effective legislators respond directly to the needs and concerns of their constituency. We should make every effort to work with both the constituency and the legislator.

The increased emphasis on academic education and the back to basics movement have been both an asset and a liability for our program in the political arena. Students who are better prepared academically will do better in our programs. Vocational agriculture is also one of the most basic programs in public education. Countless hours have been spent teaching slow students fractions and decimals when the course offering is identified as animal nutrition or agricultural mechanics. Some politicians and administrators interpret the back to basics movement as a need to reduce emphasis on vocational education, especially vocational agriculture. Politicians must strive to be out front in whatever movement is popular with their constituency.

The Political Arena

The back to basics movement has, to a certain extent, reduced the available time for teachers to work with political interests and support groups. At one time, the individual teacher was able to bring about the necessary legislative contact without additional assistance. During recent legislative sessions, it has become very evident that those outside the program can be much more influential than can the individual teacher. This is not to say that the teacher organization is not important, because it is extremely vital to the complete political picture. Many teachers have been unsuccessful in their political efforts because of their vested interest. Professional lobbyists and people outside the program can have a tremendous impact if they are properly directed.

The economic recession has had a negative impact on the legislative influence our program is able to muster. As funds become more limited and legislators look closely at state expenditures, our program becomes more vulnerable to cuts. We must continually keep in mind that legislators respond to their constituency. Third world countries are becoming more self-sufficient in agricultural products causing our exports to decrease. This situation gives agriculture another challenge at home. Perhaps we have not been as cost effective in our program as the national



BY JAY L. EUDY

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economy would dictate. Reduced tax revenue throughout the country will mandate a reduction in spending. We in vocational agriculture must be willing to take our prorated share of the cuts. The problem we face is being able to hold those cuts to a minimum. Most state legislators make the major decisions on budget matters in committee meetings or meetings prior to the scheduled committee meetings well in advance of the public meetings. It is most important that we have our interest expressed in all these early meetings as well as in the regular meetings. There are several ways to handle this problem, but the bottom line is we must be represented!

Our program has the distinction of being one of the top leadership training vehicles in the public school system. The product of our program (our former students) is found in all professions at all levels. Our former students are known to occupy many elected offices at both state and national levels. We also have a great number of former students working as lobbyists for different groups. Although these people are employed by firms or organizations to represent private interests, these lobbyists can put in a word of concern for our program as they go about their daily tasks. Many of these lobbyists have close personal contact with politicians who will make decisions affecting our program. It would be unfair to expect hired lobbyists to spend considerable time working free for our cause; however, just to mention our program as they make contacts concerning their own interests in another matter.

Garnering Support

There is a time and place for teacher involvement in the political arena. Whenever teachers are to be used, an effort should be made to bring in professional people to provide the teachers with the necessary training for the task at hand. Contacts made by uninformed or improperly informed people may bring about much more harm than good. It is poor planning if everyone involved in making contacts is not properly prepared to carry out the mission. A number of professional lobbyists are most anxious to spend time helping prepare non-professional people to lobby for our cause. A short training session of two or three

hours for a specific issue should be adequate in most situations. Detailed information as to who will be contacted by whom, what will be discussed and how much time to spend in the process can be covered. Minor things such as a picture of the legislator targeted and office location should not be overlooked. These events can make the visitor much more comfortable and the final outcome will be more positive.

The change in the makeup of state legislatures to non-agricultural bodies has mandated that we learn to leverage our strength. We live in a world of Political Action Committees (PACs) and other support groups. The formation and function of a PAC is another subject and will not be covered here. There are many pros and cons to look at if you are interested in a PAC. Probably our greatest strength is in the grassroots support for our program.

A Political Network

We do a fine job of teaching leadership, but we have not been so effective when it comes to putting this leadership training into action. To be effective, we must have an organization in place that can generate a great number of telephone calls, telegrams, or letters with a very short notice. These calls, wires, and letters must be properly worded, sent to the proper people, and done at the exact time for maximum results. None of these activities can be left to chance. Teachers can be very effective in the operation of this network. Former students and parents seem more than ready to accept the challenge of working this pyramid-type organization. Once the organization is in place, it should be activated on a trial basis periodically to work out any problems. A good organization can be activated by having one person contact four or five others and continue the chain reaction until all people in the network have been contacted. It is vital that all members of the network be informed completely of their importance to the organization. As the organization is being formed, consideration should be given to geographically cover all parts of the state. It is also important that someone from each political subdivision of the state be designated to serve on the team.

The political involvement does not necessarily mean we are constantly asking for help. Our elected officials have continual battles confronting them. Our program supporters should follow politics closely enough to know which legislators are involved in different battles. Those legislators need to hear from our people just to let them know we are concerned even if we are not involved in a raging battle at the moment. Once we have established that rapport with the legislators, it is much easier for us to make contact when we must do so.

The news media will lend a vital arm to our cause if we carefully analyze their activities. Some elected officials have the ability to draw media coverage more readily than others. We can wisely befriend those who are popular with the media and capitalize on their popularity. The mass media are constantly looking for good stories. If our program can be the source of some of these stories, we are the winner. Again, we have former students who are involved in this profession. Perhaps an agricultural communications major (and a former student) would enjoy doing a few



The final signing of a bill is an excellent opportunity to provide publicity for those who supported the proposal. Former Texas Governor Mark White signs into law such a bill while program supporters look on. (Photo courtesy of the author).



State Senator Bill Sarpalius (center) and Senate Education Chairman Carl Parker (R) are very effective members of the Senate Education Committee. Both welcome representatives of our program to their offices. (Photo courtesy of the author).

stories on our students, teachers, parents, or the program in general. Anything that is professionally done can be used. These stories should be used to help inform legislators of activity in the home district.

Everything mentioned to this point has an important place in the structure of the machine that will strengthen our political involvement at the state level. The organization of this vehicle should be toward involving concerned, interested people in the maintenance and progress of the vocational agriculture program. We have a wealth of former students, retired teachers, retired state staff, and retired teacher trainers as well as parents of current students willing to do the work. They could be organized into an executive committee, a board of directors, and committees to carry out this task. Some funds are necessary but this should not be the major thrust of the organization. A vital link is communication within the group. Perhaps a person should be employed by the organization to research and prepare news releases as well as internal communications. The individual supporters need to be informed as to what is being done and plans for the future. Basically, we must involve concerned supporters in an organization and guide them to bring about the desired results from the political strength at the state level.

Put Yourself in The Picture

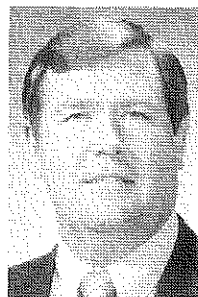
Do you know your United States Representatives and Senators on a first name basis? If funding for your program was in jeopardy, could you call your representative at the state or national level? They want to know you, their constituent; moreover, they want to be made aware of your needs and opinions.

Developing An Awareness

Quality programs of vocational agriculture and agribusiness education require the commitment and support of not only agriculture leaders but also the community at large, businesses, industries, and professions. Positive support allows agricultural educators to carry out quality programs which meet the needs of a clientele involved in both production and agribusiness. However, at the same time, educators should remember that it is easy to support programs that are accountable and meeting needs of the total community.

Developing support for local, state, and federal programs is an on-going challenge. If modern, high quality programs are meeting needs at the local level, it is rather easy to sell the "idea" at the state and federal levels. Advocates can readily recognize and point to the visibility and contributions the programs are making to communities through graduates who have a definite impact as leaders and professionals. These young leaders are tremendous assets to the program locally; however, there is a definite need for all of us in the profession to become more involved at the state and federal levels. It is vitally important to know the nature and status of agriculture and vocational legislation and where it is in the legislative process.

To attempt a successful legislative venture requires support from a wide based "grassroots" endeavor. In addition, it becomes necessary for those in the profession to contact support groups within agricultural industry and inform them of program needs and alternatives to pending legislation. At this point, personal contact between professionals and their elected representatives is a must if effective legislation is to be passed. Elected officials are likely to call "experts" and leaders within the profession to testify regarding program merit and the effect such legislation may have on local constituencies. Commitment and solidarity in the profession are essential in presenting a united effort on behalf of pending legislation. An understanding of the legislative process as well as a good public relations program are essential if policy makers and their staff members are to be persuaded that programs are legitimate and meeting the needs of constituents. Exemplary programs can play a positive role in getting favorable legislation out of committee and onto the floor of the respective body. It is vital that staff members supporting pertinent legislation be able to point-out programs that serve as role models for the profession and agricultural industry. Model programs and the support of alumni may have a more effective influence than an intense lobbying campaign from various



By JAMES D. WHITE

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"special interest" groups even though these groups are vital to the overall support of the vocational agriculture/FFA program. Ideas for new, favorable program legislation and the decision to initiate such legislation may be much more effective if leaders in the profession draft the bill and provide "friendly" policy makers the support and resources needed to carry the bill.

The Legislative Process

How do bills become law? Committees and subcommittees concerned with vocational education conduct research, evaluate information, and make recommendations regarding the needs of vocational education. The Appropriations and Budget committees hold the "purse strings" concerning program proposals related to all bills.

How does the committee process function? Budget resolutions are developed in each house through the Authorization, Appropriations, and Budget committees. Congress proposes its budget; the President proposes another. Authorization committees of both Houses decide which programs should exist and the level of funding each merits. This information is then sent to the Budget and Appropriations Committees for further study. The Federal level authorizing committees for vocational education are: 1) The House Education and Labor Committee and 2) The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee.

The Appropriations Committee of both bodies make recommendations annually concerning the levels of funding going to vocational education programs. Vocational education advocates must communicate their needs to the Appropriations Committee each fiscal year to see that adequate funding recommendations are made for program operation. At this point, the influential House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services and the Senate Appropriations Committee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education make recommendations to the full committees of both chambers.

The Budget Committees of both houses receive the President's budget proposal and requests recommendations from the Authorization and Appropriations Committees. They carefully study the proposals, amend them, and introduce their own budget resolutions. The resolutions set a "spending" ceiling for each budget category.

Ninety percent of all congressional action rest with these three powerful committees. Since these three committees so forcefully impact legislation, when do they meet? There is a general timeline for the committees to act on legislative proposals. Therefore, it is important to remember that if your Representative or Senator serves on these committees, you communicate your interest and recommendations during the critical periods of decision-making. The Authorization Committees make recommendations concerning programs under their jurisdiction during January to March of each calendar year. Results and recommendations from committee hearings are then passed to the Budget Committees of both houses which also meet during the same timeline. This is the time committee members receive authorization requests and attempt to have a budget prepared by April 15. Members of the Appropriations Committee hold many hearings. Administration officials are invited to testify first, then public witnesses are allowed to provide testimony. The Appropriations Committees hold to the February to September timeline each year.

Correspondence reaching conferees during general timelines is considered timely, appropriate, and helpful. Group meetings and personal visits are also most appropriate during this time.

What happens after the House and Senate Committees meet? The legislative process moves around the actions of subcommittees and full committees. 1) Subcommittee deliberations are held, congressional staff members prepare the first drafts of new legislation; 2) Subcommittees review proposed legislation and make changes called "mark-up" on the bill; 3) Full committee deliberations are conducted on bills that have completed subcommittee "mark-up"; 4) The full committee then reviews the legislation and makes desired changes prior to a floor vote; 5) At the time of a floor vote, any member can offer amendments to the bill; 6) After passage by the respective legislative bodies, the bill then goes to a joint House-Senate Conference committee where members resolve any remaining constraints. The bill in its final version is sent back to the full House and Senate for a final floor vote and then to the President for his signature. The President's signature completes action on the legislation and it becomes laws.

Conclusion

Many agricultural educators have found that they can have a positive influence toward getting favorable agricultural and vocational legislation enacted. The benefits



Jay L. Eudy (left), Director of Agricultural Education for the Texas Education Agency, presents the "Blue and Gold" Award to State Representative and former State FFA President Jerry Clark. Rep. Clark has established himself as a dedicated, effective supporter of vocational education. (Photo courtesy of Jay Eudy).

will be the result of hard work, but it may improve the opportunities for many for generations to come. Let's take the risk of becoming involved and committing ourselves to do our part in passing favorable legislation. Passage is difficult at best; however, it is well worth our commitment and perseverance to afford young people as well as adults the opportunities to develop leadership, decision-making skills, and occupational experiences that lead to gainful employment.

"The time is now!" We cannot afford the luxury of sitting back while those outside the agricultural and vocational education community legislate program direction and quality standards for us. The question remains, "If not now, when? . . . If not us, who?"

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RESOURCES

Of all teenagers, one out of every ten will never attend high school. Of all students who reach the sixth grade, 30 percent will leave school prior to high school graduation. Those students "drop out".

Examining the topic of the dropout and the potential dropout, researchers at the National Center for Research in

Vocational Education have assembled the latest available data concerning the skills of dropouts and presented their findings in **Building Basic Skills: The Dropout**. The findings show a correlation between dropouts and their retention of basic skills. Dropouts typically lag behind their peers in basic skills acquisition, the very skills necessary to

function in society.

You may order **Building Basic Skills: The Dropout**, (RD 236 — \$5.75), 58 pp., from the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, Publications Office, Box N., 1960 Kenny Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43210; 614/486-3655 or toll-free outside Ohio at 800/848-4815.

How to Effectively Influence Legislation with Congressional Leaders

In a number of national and state meetings with vocational educators, I have asked several questions. First, "How many of you know the name of your congressman?" Usually most hands are raised in any given group. Second, "How many of you feel your congressman knows you on a personal basis or as a personal friend?" Usually there is a dramatic reduction in the number of hands raised.

Third, "How many of you have made a financial contribution or raised a few small donations for your congressman's campaign?" Usually a few, but not as many hands appear in the affirmative. Fourth, "How many of you have personally 'looked eye-to-eye' with your congressman and said, 'I want to help you as a volunteer to distribute your leaflets, make telephone calls, hold a coffee for area citizens to meet their elected representative, etc.?' " Usually very few, if any, hands appear.

Then I ask, "Why should you expect your congressman to have an interest in vocational agriculture or vocational education? There are a thousand demands on his or her time and the limited revenue the elected official controls. Why should the elected official place a higher emphasis on vocational agriculture and vocational education? You can make the difference!"

The most effective way to impress a legislator is to be a trusted friend. If you're not presently a friend with your congressman, become a helpful, trusted friend — it's easy! Become a friend by being willing to lend a "helping hand"; become a good neighbor to the congressman.

An enthusiastic, motivated, and effective agricultural educator in the local community can influence the views of not only young people, but adults outside the classroom. This is one of the reasons that a vocational agriculture instructor is extremely important to an elected official. The agricultural educator active in the political process can be as important to an elected official as the elected official is to the agricultural educator.

An astute, caring public servant will respond to each segment that he or she represents, but will also recognize those individuals to whom others might listen and thus form an opinion. A vocational agriculture teacher definitely falls into that category. Trusted allies and contacts such as community educators are invaluable to public officials. From this rural congressman's perspective, the input of agricultural educators is an important pulse and reflection of the needs and opinions of a community.

Influencing Legislators

How can you effectively have a bearing on legislation with your Representative? Many of the vocational agriculture teachers that I work with on a consistent basis helped



BY U.S. REPRESENTATIVE WES WATKINS

(The Honorable Mr. Watkins represents the 3rd District of Oklahoma for the U.S. House of Representatives and is a member of the Appropriations Committee, the Subcommittee on Rural Development and Agriculture, and the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development.)

during my first election by giving "personal testimony" on my behalf, by saying "a good word," and encouraging others to vote for me. Communication by word of mouth is an important tool that can be most effective in a rural community. Many teachers helped my campaigns by installing fence straddler signs, constructing and distributing yard signs, distributing leaflets, etc. Volunteers can telephone an assigned list to ask constituents for their vote for a specific candidate or to invite individuals to attend a coffee event or to meet with the congressman. Key contacts such as agricultural educators can play an important part in this respect.

This kind of working relationship, although not necessary to command the respect of a Member of Congress, definitely facilitates a bond. You are someone he or she can depend on in that community. Financial contributions fall into that same category. During my first campaign, about 5,000 small contributions generated the revenue needed to run the winning campaign. Although special treatment is not given, you don't forget those individuals who gave of their time and resources to win an uphill battle. Agricultural educators were early key players in my election to Congress.

Be willing to go the extra mile. Volunteer to help set-up meetings and other events for the congressman. This will be appreciated and not forgotten. Contacting your Representative through letters, telephone calls, telegrams, and personal visits to the district office(s) are means of communication that should not be dismissed. Individuals who target an elected representative with their feelings and concerns on selected issues tend to command his or her attention more often than a shotgun approach of commenting on every single issue. The shotgun approach may bring your name to the Representative's mind but that recognition may dilute your influence and message.

Communicating Your Position

A thoughtful, well-written personal letter explaining your position on the specific issue or the problem is better received than the often thoughtless and effortless affixing

of a signature to a pre-printed letter, petition, or postcard. In most congressional offices, these pre-printed communications are often responded to in the same manner — a standard informative response letter. All mail is answered, but a personal letter usually is more powerful than a mimeograph barrage.

I view almost every one of the typed or hand-written letters and sign the response correspondence.

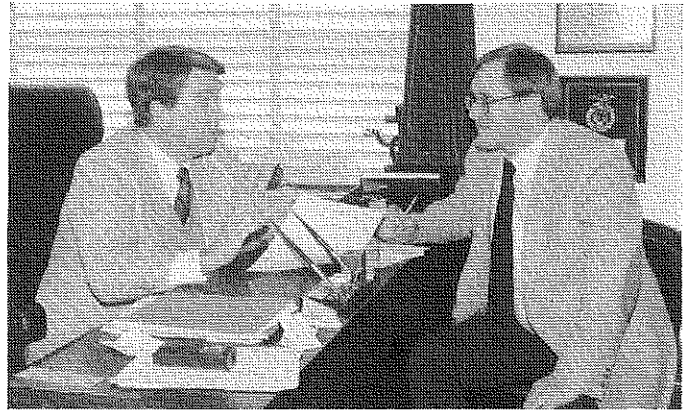
It is as important to the congressman as it is to you that he or she be contacted about important federal issues concerning you and your community. Get to know the staff on a district level as well as the key Washington aides who specialize in your fields of interest.

The ultimate opportunity for a considerable impact on legislation is to have a personal working relationship with the congressman. Even with having a personal rapport with your Representative, it is often necessary to discuss the issue with an aide. This aide will communicate with the Representative through a memo or personal briefing. Conflicting schedules and time constraints can often lead to a cavalcade of exchanging telephone calls with the member. Time can be saved when it is possible to communicate the nature of your request or problem with the staff.

There are times that it is essential that you talk personally to the congressman. And, he or she wants to talk to you, but many times may be in meetings or voting in the chamber. Let the staff know if it is crucial that you communicate directly to him or her. Usually this means leaving a message so she or he can return your call. Communicate your request in a clear and concise manner. Remember, with more than 500,000 constituents to represent, it may take a longer length of time than anticipated to receive a response to many requests. My day usually begins at 5:30 a.m. and ends near midnight. Even then, I never get it all done. In that respect, being a Member of Congress is much like production agriculture.

Most staff members are former constituents of the Representative's district or have some association with that area. They understand the problems and share the commitment of the Member representing that congressional district. Their actions should mirror the goals and objectives of that Representative. When you cannot reach the Congressman and you talk to the staff, they will on most occasions be able to begin immediately in helping solve a problem or request.

An aggressive Representative considers carefully the views of the constituency and will offer an opportunity for individuals to meet with her or him locally. I hold town meetings in every county and most communities each year. These are golden opportunities to establish a relationship with him or her in addition to the hundreds of other local and area events that your Representative will be involved in during the year. When the Member has a local meeting, be dependable and attend these meetings. In every town that I visit, I can anticipate and expect certain individuals to be there each time. Make sure your presence is made known, usually with a simple hello and handshake. Since he or she is literally meeting with dozens of people, help him or her make time to visit with them. Remember, a true friend doesn't insist on much time, but will make sure the



Rep. Watkins discussing legislative matters affecting agricultural education with his Legislative Assistant for Agriculture Paul Jackson. Jackson was very active in agricultural organizations in Oklahoma as a student and now as a professional. (Photo courtesy of the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education).



Ralph Thomas (left), NVATA President, and Bill Kimbrell (right), President of the Oklahoma Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association, discussing with Rep. Watkins how to become involved in the political process. (Photo courtesy of the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education).

congressman spends the time meeting and shaking hands of other constituents. When time permits, I often will plan my day's activities to allow for "stopping by" to visit the local vocational agriculture teacher and other individuals in the community.

When your Representative recognizes you as a valuable asset and a source for information into problems and concerns of your community, you will not have to contact him or her. This person will be contacting you on many occasions.

Summary

You are an important link in the rural political process. If it were not for a vocational agriculture teacher who became interested in me as an individual, I would not be a Member of Congress today. Most of you impact the attitudes and opinions of countless students, parents, leaders, and other citizens of the community. A good Representative recognizes this as well as the valuable information that is gleaned from conversations with these individuals.

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How to Effectively Influence Legislation with Congressional Leaders

(Continued from page 15)

Many times, if it were not for an individual alerting me to a crisis or a situation, we could have completely missed the matter. What you have to say is important and don't ever forget it. A tip from someone last year on a local level resulted in my being able to follow through and protect the funding for brucellosis calfood vaccinations that saved our cattlemen millions of dollars. A strong, visible, and leadership oriented FFA chapter can go a long way in capturing the attention of an elected official. He or she wants to be a part or associated with a positive, aggressive com-

munity group. A simple invitation to speak at a banquet or participate in a leadership conference can be a ticket to a great relationship with your congressman. These events are "your time" when your chapter can make a lasting impression. The Member of Congress will not forget that a chapter and its membership can be only as good as its leader(s).

Most importantly, agricultural educators have a contribution to make to the political process and they can make a difference. Stand up and be counted.

Believe me from one who knows - your congressman will appreciate your efforts - you can become a trusted and valuable friend to your congressman and in turn more valuable to your profession and community.

THEME

The National Council's Role in the Political Process

We live in an ever changing world! And change is abundant in all phases of our lives: personally, professionally, and politically. Solutions used for yesterday's problems don't seem to be effective today. We search for simple answers to difficult questions even when complex answers are warranted. Nowhere is this situation more prevalent than in our hallowed halls of government. The national political environment is demanding personally as well as professionally. As agricultural educators, our role in that environment has to be firmly in place if we are to directly and/or indirectly influence legislation positively for the future of our profession.

National Leadership Needed

In late 1982, an ad hoc committee was formed that had the charge to propose a structure for national leadership in vocational and technical education in agriculture. This consultation and study resulted in an organizational structure that encourages and facilitates all constituencies in agricultural education to participate constructively in the:

- 1) Identification of important issues in public school education in agriculture,
- 2) Investigation, study, and debate of issues, and
- 3) Formation of policy and program recommendations.

This organized structure is now commonly called "The Council." The National Council for Vocational and Technical Education in Agriculture or The Council was formed to provide a forum in which the profession can address important issues and generate solutions to problems of common concern. The Council operates as a "think tank" to generate information and stimulate the improvement of agricultural education. Although The Council is a national leadership mechanism in agricultural education, it does not perceive itself as a direct influencing group in the legislative arena. Rather, The Council, through task forces,



By JOHN POPE

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study committees, etc., formulates potential and positive recommendations relative to programmatic or fiscal legislative needs without direct involvement in state or federal legislatures. After a particular study or function has been completed, The Council would make this information available to and promote it with other groups and individuals within the agricultural education profession at all levels. Hopefully, because of the objective nature of a particular study's content, this information can become a national theme or thrust within the profession.

It is important that agricultural educators at all levels be aware of and able to react to issues of our profession on the local, state, and national levels. Many times one is barged by pleas to "call your Congressman" about a specific need or legislative issue. While this approach is fine, many don't feel comfortable doing this because of a lack of education and understanding of national issues and a lack of knowledge about the working of our Federal government. Many don't want to risk appearing foolish in making suggestions to a Congressman or Senator about how certain issues or ideas should work. Now, because of The Council, information can be composed through objective study and recommendations made toward specific needs, thus providing individuals a base of information to help them



On December 18, 1984, former Secretary of Agriculture John Block and former Secretary of Education Terrel Bell signed a cooperative agreement for a National Study of Agricultural Education in Secondary Schools. (Photo courtesy of the author).

become more comfortable in influencing the political process.

Modern approaches to problems require substantial and thorough research to formulate a rational position. In agricultural education, this statement is more than true! Because of The Council's objective role in the identification and study of major issues within agricultural education, other entities such as the National Vocational Agriculture Teachers' Association, FFA Alumni, Ag Ed Division of AVA, etc., are provided this information, therefore, directly impacting upon specific legislation. So what has been done thus far by The Council in formulating recommendations to the profession for legislative action? Two such projects are underway.

The National Study

On December 18, 1984, former Secretary of Agriculture John Block and former Secretary of Education Terrel Bell jointly commissioned a nationwide study to examine agricultural education on the secondary level, analyze the findings, and make recommendations for program improvement. The study has been conducted by the National Academy of Sciences' Board on Agriculture. The study committee was comprised of individuals representing the education and agriculture communities, agricultural education, and the private sector. Dr. Daniel Aldrich, Chancellor Emeritus of the University of California-Irvine, served as chairperson of the committee. A variety of meetings were held for the committee to seek out information and perspectives. Committee meetings, regional and national hearings, and on-site visits were among the many settings the study committee used for its information gathering. A number of individuals addressed topics relevant to their role in agricultural education. Among those who testified were representatives of vocational agriculture, Agriculture in the Classroom, teacher educators, 4-H, teachers, school administrators, parents, and community members. Through the various meetings, visits, etc., the committee focused its attention on four basic issues:



The National FFA officers discuss current federal education issues with Secretary of Education William Bennett. (Photo courtesy of the author).

1) Why teach agricultural education in the secondary schools? What are the purposes of instruction in and about agriculture in the secondary schools?

2) Who should be instructed in agriculture in secondary education?

3) What should the content of instruction be?

4) How do we articulate between agriculture at the secondary level versus agriculture at the elementary, post-secondary, and adult levels.

The scheduled release date of the committee's report is July 1987. Because of the scope, nature, and issues discussed in the report, many ramifications could take place politically when the report is released. The entire agricultural education profession, both groups and individuals, must carefully study and examine the report's findings and proceed accordingly as to what action, programatically and politically, that each must take.

Assessing Legislative Needs

In December 1986, the American Vocational Association's Agricultural Education Division passed a resolution that The Council conduct a study to assess the legislative (Federal) needs of the agricultural education profession. The Council's Executive Committee approved the request and a special legislative committee was formed to oversee the project. The study attempted to identify the priority legislative needs of the agricultural education profession as perceived by head teacher educators in agriculture, state supervisors of agricultural education, and presidents of state vocational agriculture teacher associations. The strengths and weaknesses inherent in current federal vocational education legislation (Carl D. Perkins Act) was also identified along with recommendations for future Federal legislation.

The study posed three basic questions:

1) What do you like about the current Federal legislation (Carl D. Perkins Act) for vocational education?

2) What don't you like about the current Federal legislation for vocational education?

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The National Council's Role in the Political Process

(Continued from page 17)

3) What specific needs would you like to have addressed in future Federal legislation (Reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Act) for vocational education.

Once input was obtained on these questions, the responses were ranked and another instrument was sent to members of the responding group so they could prioritize their likes, dislikes, and needs.

The Council's legislative committee summarized its findings and submitted a report to the Council's Board of Directors for approval. The report was then submitted to the AVA's Agricultural Education Division for its use. The findings of the report will be released by the Division in the Summer of 1987.

Again, The Council served as a facilitator of information to an agricultural education related group which will in turn have a tremendous impact on future policy for our profession.

Summary

Although The Council does not directly involve itself politically at the national level, it serves a tremendous role in fact finding and issue stimulation for policy in agricultural education. By providing guidance, resources, and recommendations for other groups within agricultural education, The Council will continue to stimulate creativity, develop fresh initiatives, and create a climate for renewal in strengthening political involvement for the profession. And for today in agricultural education, that is a vital role!



Established in 1984, The National Council for Vocational and Technical Education in Agriculture is providing leadership to the entire agricultural education profession. Shown here is the first Council Board of Directors. (Photo courtesy of the author).

THEME

Effective Public Relations in The Political Process

Sometimes we know what needs to be done, but we don't quite know how to do it. Vocational educators know that public relations is the cornerstone of a favorable political climate for vocational education. To mount massive, short-term campaigns to save funding or other program support without the underpinning of an on-going public relations process is to commit the folly of trying to build a house on the shifting sands as we have been warned not to do by the carpenter from Nazareth.

An important step in establishing a rock-like political foundation for vocational education involves keeping the legislature informed and conscious of your existence.

Ohio Agriculture Day

Every other February, following the election of a new state legislature, the Ohio Agricultural Council designates an "Ohio Agriculture Day" during which the agricultural community conducts functions to acquaint legislators with the status of agriculture in the state. Several years ago, our vocational agriculture teachers, state staff, and state FFA officers initiated a legislative breakfast held on the morning of this day. An FFA chapter in each legislative district (both House and Senate) volunteers to host its legislator at the breakfast. Teachers sign-up to host legislators at the September district meetings. State staff members provide sample letters of invitation for the schools to send to the



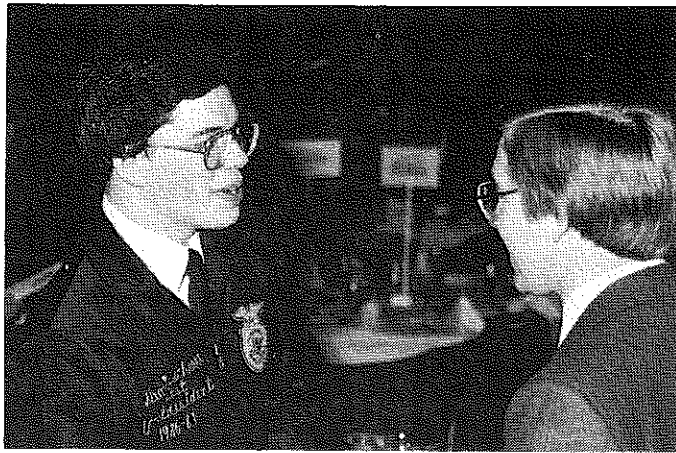
By **ROB HOVIS**

(Mr. Hovis is the Executive Secretary for the Ohio FFA and a State Supervisor for the Agricultural Education Service, State Department of Education, 65 South Front Street, Room 910, Columbus, Ohio 43266-0308.)

legislators, and make arrangements for the facilities, meal, and program. State FFA officers plan and conduct a program which typically includes an FFA audio-visual and comments from the state superintendent of education and the director of vocational education. National FFA Week pamphlets are placed on the tables. A professional photographer photographs each legislator with the teacher and FFA member hosting him or her. These photos and a news release are mailed immediately to hometown papers.

The cost of the photos, the meals for the legislators and selected special guests, the decorations, and the gifts presented to the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate are included in the price of the tickets purchased by the hosting schools. The cost this year was \$12 per ticket.

The breakfast meal is served at 7 a.m. The program



A state officer thanks a member of the Ohio General Assembly for attending the biennial breakfast. (Photo courtesy of the author).

begins at 7:40 a.m. and adjourns by 8:30 a.m., after which teachers and students follow self-guided tours to the various branches of state government. State staff have visited each major office, arranging for someone there to be on hand to greet students and teachers and explain the function of that agency.

The 50 minutes we spend before this important body of policy-makers are perhaps the most important 50 minutes in the two-year period. We have been pleased with an attendance of about 90 of the possible 132 legislators and have received favorable reactions from many of those who attend.

It is difficult to imagine a more important audience to be assembled for a program highlighting vocational education. It is a considerable undertaking well coordinated by Robert Freeze, an area supervisor. Freeze will provide detailed information and suggestions to any state wishing to plan such an event.

We have found that most legislators sincerely appreciate receiving concise, accurate information about programs supported with state funds. They enjoy the opportunity to meet with teachers and student constituents while benefiting from favorable publicity in the process.

Concluding Comments

We in vocational education must avoid the "I'm in trouble again - help me" posture. Gramm-Rudman sent us stampeding to the post office with boxes of letters to our Congressmen. And we'll do it again — when we're in trouble again. Instead, effective public relations should be continual, often low-key, and must follow a planned strategy. Tracking key individuals through a series of experiences which bring them increasingly more involvement with your programs will help establish firm support with civic leaders.

We don't get approval on every education proposal sent to the legislature, but we cannot help believing that images and attitudes formed by legislators who have attended our breakfasts over the years have served us well. We know that some other states are involved with similar activities. Perhaps an idea-sharing session on this topic would be a worthwhile break-out meeting at a regional or national conference.

OHIO FFA LEADERSHIP-CITIZENSHIP DAY FOR VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE STUDENTS

February 4, 1987
Columbus, Ohio

- 7:00 a.m. Group Pictures . . . Members of the 117th General Assembly, students and teachers
"Vocational Agriculture and FFA Salute the Ohio Legislature" Breakfast
Welcome . . .
Jeff Vance, State FFA President
Invocation . . .
Jill Goodbar, Central Sectional Vice President
— Breakfast Buffet —
Opening Ceremonies . . .
Senior Officers
Presentation of Colors . . .
Cyndi Williamson, Southwest Sectional Vice President
Introductions . . .
Brenda Litt, North Central Sectional Vice President
Christina Wolfe, Southeast Sectional Vice President
Recognition of Leadership . . .
Jeff Vance
The Year of Reflections . . .
Dr. Franklin B. Walter, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Agricultural Education in Ohio . . .
Jodi Flinger, State FFA Reporter
FFA Activities in Ohio . . .
Jerry Boes, Northwest Sectional Vice President
Scott Sooy, State FFA Vice President
Dan Schroer, West Sectional Vice President
Where Are Our Graduates? . . .
Warren Boerger, State FFA Treasurer
The Reason for Optimism . . .
Dr. Darrell Parks, Director, Vocational and Career Education
Closing Ceremonies . . .
Senior Officers
8:30 a.m. Adjournment of Breakfast Session

LEADERSHIP-CITIZENSHIP DAY PROGRAM

- 8:45 a.m. Assemble in the Rotunda of the Capitol
"History of the Capitol"
Miss Veronica Crumbley, Capitol Guide
Remarks by the Honorable Mary Ellen Withrow, Treasurer of State
Visit to the Senate Chamber
Remarks by the Honorable Paul Pfeifer (former State FFA Officer)
Visit to the House of Representatives Chamber
Remarks by the Honorable Larry Adams
Remarks by the Honorable Paul Mechling (former vocational agriculture teacher)
10:30 a.m. Assemble in the State Office Tower Lobby*
Tour Supreme Court and 48th Floor Observation Deck
— or —
Observe the House and Senate in Session (take seats in the gallery)
— or —
Observe committee hearings (see insert)
LUNCH in downtown Columbus
1:00 p.m. Assemble in the State Office Tower Lobby*
Tour Supreme Court and 48th Floor Observation Deck
— or —
Observe the House and Senate in Session (take seats in the gallery)
— or —
Observe committee hearings (see insert)
2:30 p.m. Adjourn - with new understanding of your state government and your responsibilities as a citizen.

*This tour is limited to the first 40 participants.

The Political Process of Communication Within Secondary Education

Several years ago, local school administrators in Nebraska began to ask why so many "out of classroom" activity hours need to be spent in the vocational agriculture program? This question was an outgrowth of the Nebraska Governor's Task Force on Education Report, which basically said that too many classroom hours were being interrupted by out of the classroom activities. A reduction in such interruptions was a necessary ingredient in the re-establishment of excellence in basic secondary education.

To maintain meaningful participation in vocational agriculture and FFA activities, statewide leadership was needed to review the scheduling of activities. The leadership was provided through a study committee of instructors, administrators, and students from each vocational agriculture district in Nebraska. The committee's objectives were:

1. To emphasize to all concerned the necessary components for a meaningful FFA program of activities.
2. To allow for a constructive dialogue between secondary administrators, vocational agriculture instructors, and students of vocational agriculture concerning the current impact of FFA activity participation on secondary education.
3. To provide for input from students, administrators, and instructors affected by any change in the current quantity and scheduling of FFA activities.
4. To create a mutually acceptable list of recommendations regarding the future scheduling of FFA activities that would meet the educational goals and objectives of secondary school administrators, vocational agriculture instructors, and vocational agriculture students.

Process Used

Approximately 30 students, instructors, and administrators met at the initial meeting of the committee to discuss the positive and negative aspects associated with Vocational Agriculture/FFA participation.

As a result of the two day discussion, the committee compiled a recommended list of 16 activity management strategies. These strategies were presented by six members (two each of administrators, instructors, and students) of the committee to the Nebraska vocational agriculture instructors at their summer conference. All vocational agriculture instructors present at the conference were involved in a committee process to approve or disapprove the recommendations. Fifteen of 16 recommendations were approved.



BY LLOYD BELL

(Dr. Bell is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska 68583-0709.)

A committee of administrators and instructors originally selected at the study committee meeting assembled in Fall 1985 to devise a dissemination and implementation plan to explain the approved activity management recommendations to teachers and administrators of all schools offering vocational agriculture in Nebraska. This committee also formulated guidelines to implement the recommendation to form District VoAg/FFA Activity Management Committees.

Six regional meetings were conducted to accomplish the information dissemination process, and formulate the initial activity management committee in each of Nebraska's 12 districts. The management committees were formulated with three administrators and three teachers serving on each committee.

Results

By using Saturdays and afternoons and/or evenings, and by consolidating events, a reduction of 49 hours of in-class interruptions was realized in 1985-86. The activities constituting these 49 hours affected approximately 200 students of vocational agriculture. These figures translate into a net reduction of classroom interruptions of 9,800 student contact hours.

Besides the immediate results of this project, long range benefits will make positive contributions to vocational education in general.

The formation of the Activity Management Teams is an example of the political process working to the advantage of vocational agriculture. It has allowed the exchange of positive dialogue between individuals expressing different concerns regarding the delivery of vocational education in agriculture. It has allowed those participating individuals to become better informed of each others' concerns and has fostered their working together on common concerns without sacrificing program quality. All of these positive results have been accomplished with one simple technique - communication.

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| Eudy, Jay L. | June, 10 | Norris, Richard J. | May, 5 | Welton, Richard F. | February, 21; March, 6 |
| Fisher, Robert W. | April, 14 | Nowels, K. Elliott | September, 5 | White, James D. | June, 12 |
| Fleet, William C. | April, 8 | Olcott, Kenneth W. | August, 13 | Wilhelmson, Nancy R. | January, 16 |
| Flowers, Jim | September, 20 | Osborne, Ed | September, 20 | Winsor, Bud | December, 21 |
| Gilbertson, Osmund S. | August, 19 | | | Witt, Eldon E. | June, 8 |
| Guilinger, Jim | November, 15 | | | Yoder, Edgar P. | April, 8 |

Stories in Pictures

1986 NVATA Award Winners



OUTSTANDING YOUNG MEMBER — Seated, Left to Right: Thomas L. Wheeldon, Schuyler, NE; Robert L. Hoffman, Bellevue, OH; and Erwin Berry, St. Marys, WV.

Standing, left to right: Marc Wilson, John Deere, Dallas, TX; Lynn W. Hjorth, Preston, ID; Robert Farquhar, Altus, OK; Jerry G. Williamson, Opelika, AL; and Elton Bass, John Deere, Dallas, TX.



IDEAS UNLIMITED CONTEST — Left to Right: Dale Crawford, Terrebonne, OR (Oregon Association Award); Frederic H. Stillwagen, Allentown, PA (Pennsylvania Association Award); Glen Ruder, Osseo, MI (Michigan Association Award); Neal Schlautman, Scribner, NE (Nebraska Association Award) — National Winner; Floyd Brockington, Florence, SC (South Carolina Award); and Curtis Graham, Coordinator Program Development, Ruritan National, Dublin, VA.

*(Photos courtesy of Sam Stenzel,
NVATA Executive Director.)*



AGRI-SCIENCE TEACHER OF THE YEAR — Left to Right: Robert D. Caruthers, Director of Communications, Stauffer Chemical Company-Agricultural Products Division, Chesebrough-Pond's, Inc., Westport, CT; Robert Mareth, Eldorado Springs High School Vo-Ag Department, Eldorado Springs, MO; Susan Forte, George Stone Area Vocational Center, Pensacola, FL; Steven McKay, Anderson Valley High School Vo-Ag Department, Boonville, CA (National Winner); and Brad Moffit, Ridgedale High School Vo-Ag Department, Morral, OH.



OUTSTANDING VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHER — Left to Right: Gary Horton, New Holland, Arlington, TX; Jim Yokum, Weatherford, OK; Dale Crabtree, Wellton, AZ; H. Fred Dietrich, III, Orlando, FL; William G. McVay, South Whitley, IN; Robert G. Keenan, Baltimore, MD; and John H. Rix, LeMars, IA.