



Ohio Ballot Issues

November 2009

The Catholic Conference of Ohio encourages voters to carefully consider the three statewide Issues that are on the November 3, 2009 ballot.

Issue 2

To Create the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board Constitutional Amendment

Issue 2 would require the state to create the *Livestock Care Standards Board* to prescribe standards for animal care and well-being. The standards are intended to maintain food safety, encourage locally grown and raised food, and protect Ohio farms and families.

The Board would establish standards after they considered agricultural best-management practices, biosecurity, disease prevention, animal morbidity/mortality data, food safety practices, and the protection of local, affordable food supplies.

The bi-partisan Board would be comprised of thirteen members with expertise in farming, animal care, and food safety issues. It would be chaired by the director of the state department that regulates agriculture.

Pro Arguments

- Issue 2 keeps control of agriculture under the guidance of Ohio experts, including family farmers, food safety experts, veterinarians and consumers.
- Seeks to address concerns that may surface in a possible 2010 Ohio constitutional ballot initiative that would make it a criminal offense to confine hens in certain cages, pigs in gestation crates, and calves in veal crates. Such an initiative passed in California in 2008.
- It is feared that such an Ohio initiative in 2010 will foster misinformation, harmfully disrupt livestock farms, artificially drive up the cost of animal products and restrict consumer choice and food access. The *Livestock Care Standards Board* will ensure that livestock confinement practices in Ohio are appropriately regulated and humane, thereby making future initiatives in this area less necessary.
- Many boards are currently authorized within the Ohio Constitution. Placements of boards within the Constitution reflect the importance of their mission, and need for nonpartisan actions. Such is the case for constitutionally creating this *Standards* board.

Con Arguments

- Issue 2 furthers the interests of agribusiness which supports this amendment to prevent certain animal care reforms proposed by national animal rights organizations.
- The proposed Livestock Board should not be in the State Constitution. Amending the Ohio Constitution should be reserved for significant issues that affect the rights of all Ohioans.

Church Teaching

In the Ohio Catholic bishops' statement, *Life on the Land* (1998), the bishops encourage each of us to listen to the needs and concerns of our state's farmers so that food security, environmental stewardship, just treatment of all in the agricultural system and the broadest participation of all Ohioans in the agricultural sector can be achieved.

In the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' statement, *For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food* (2003), the bishops call for the careful regulation and monitoring of confined animal feeding so that environmental risks are minimized and animals are treated as creatures of God.

Focus Questions

1. Is Issue 2 needed and well conceived?
2. Does Issue 2 reflect a change that should be addressed in the state constitution (as opposed to an issue that ought to be addressed through the legislative process)?
3. Will the creation of a Livestock Standards Board within Ohio's constitution sufficiently ensure the humane treatment of livestock, food safety, environmental stewardship, and support for farm families?



Catholic Conference of Ohio Position

A voter's position on Issue 2 involves a prudential judgment where persons of good will may differ as to the specifics of this proposal.

While there is ongoing debate regarding livestock care standards, there are many farm families in Ohio who responsibly and humanely provide food through confined livestock operations.

Regardless of one's position on Issue 2, it is vital for Ohio to have an appropriately regulated and enforced set of animal care and safe food standards, while still assuring affordable and accessible food for all.

The Catholic Bishops of Ohio support passage of Issue 2.