

**LEGISLATIVE POLICY  
OF  
MAINE STATE GRANGE  
2015**

# **AGRICULTURE POLICY STATEMENT**

We live in a complex world with ongoing challenges of producing affordable food for ourselves and the world. In 1960 it took four farmers to feed one hundred people and we exported 29% of our production around the world. In 2006 1.2 farmers fed one hundred people and we exported 22% of our production to the world. These American farmers and ranchers are the foundation of this abundant, safe and efficient food source. The Grange continues to pledge its support for rural America and family owned and operated farms and ranches.

Farmers and ranchers have depended on increasing production year after year in order to make a decent living. We feel that the farmer must consider alternative products and markets. There has never been a more crucial time in agriculture to have a unified voice. We must work together with others in a cooperative effort to advocate for agriculture. We have the responsibility to educate and convince all people in this country that they are receiving something in value in return for their support of agriculture.

Free trade agreements are not always fair when some segments of the economy are sacrificed. Free trade agreements have been negotiated on a bi-lateral and regional basis, which have the potential to be harmful to farmers and the economy. We need to be aware of and educate ourselves on this major issue. We encourage the National Grange to advocate for the creation of trade agreements that will be beneficial and flexible while protecting not only agriculture but also the American dream. The movement of agricultural products across our country as well as exports to foreign countries is vital to the economy of the nation.

The National Grange must continue to articulate our farm policy goals and then to communicate those goals to our elected leaders in Congress. It behooves America to maintain the family farm system as the cornerstone of agriculture. We must promote policies which allow our current generation of family farmers to retire with dignity and draw on their past experience to attract new generations of family farmers.

We congratulate the President and Congress on passing the 2008 Farm Bill which provides for a continuation of our strong agriculture economy. The National Grange must continue to articulate our goals and push for the rapid completion of the regulations to implement the Farm Bill and also insure that the individual sections receive the necessary appropriations to implement them.

We must be aware of the significance to U.S. agriculture of the advancements being made in other countries in their agriculture production and export technology. We must advocate for the education of our members and the general public on agricultural issues.

With the rapid population growth in our country, it is important that our rural areas are prepared for the influx of new residents. Progressive policies will be needed that will allow people to maintain the lifestyle that they desire, while preserving the character of rural America. Growth will place added pressure on the availability of public services and we must insure that these needed services are available to rural citizens. Having said that, we must also insure that we have land and adequate water for agriculture in the future.

Farmers continue to develop new technologies such as GPS precision agriculture production practices and multi-stacked genetically modified crop varieties. They are employing double or even multi-cropping and grazing strategies to increase total output per acre. Livestock producers are controlling costs by relying more on alternative feed sources such as forage/grass and distiller's dried grains (DDGs), a by product of ethanol production.

Occasionally, a person operating contrary to accepted practices is shown to the public and it is either implied or stated that this is the way things are done in order to change or even ban certain common practices. Many do not understand the significance American agriculture plays in our economy or its importance by providing a safe and plentiful source of food.

The Maine State Grange insists that the Environmental Protection Agency rely only on up-to-date scientific methodology and real world data in making accurate assessments of the risk to human health posed by the use of pesticides. We favor standard approval of generic pesticides and herbicides for use in agricultural production.

The National Grange should continue our efforts to convince Congress to extend the benefits of regional dairy programs to all dairy farmers and customers across the nation. We realize that there is a disparity in the support price of liquid milk and manufacturing milk and will look to find ways to close this gap.

The Maine State Grange supports the new Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) with the increased benefits including the new feed cost escalator based on the price of corn and hay feed.

The National Grange urges Congress and the Office of Management and Budget to consider the administrative costs in implementing government programs affecting the agricultural producer. The funds appropriated for these programs should be used to benefit the producer and not to support the administration. We need to continue to support the producer-approved commodity check-off program.

The Maine State Grange encourages increased participation with youth organizations such as 4H and FFA from the local to the national level, to draw on and develop the wonderful leadership abilities of these people. Local Granges should be encouraged to work in partnership with cooperative extension or other local agencies such a Community Involved Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), Heifer International, etc. to implement these programs. We as Grange members must enlist our farm, rural and urban neighbors to join us as Grange members and increase our voice in the legislature.

The Maine State Grange supports Country of Origin Labeling and strongly urges the implementation of the program on all food products by the USDA as provided in the 2002 Farm Bill. Further delays of this program are not beneficial to the United States producer or consumer. The Maine State Grange encourages educating the consumer on the benefits of this program. The traceability and point of origin need to be a coordinated effort by the USDA and the Department of Homeland Security in order to reduce the administrative burden.

The National Grange is well positioned to address constantly changing challenges that arise with agricultural and rural issues. By adopting innovative policies, the Grange can play a pivotal leadership role in providing support and guidance to farmers and rural citizens and enhance our efforts to maintain the viability of agriculture as a significant economic force in our country.

Due to breeding practices and the use of anabolic steroids there appears to be an increase in injuries to race horses. The Maine State Grange urges the State of Maine to study regulations to make horse racing safer for horses and jockeys.

The Maine State Grange believes in our democratic process. Our answer must be to join with all interested parties to educate the public about the realities of agriculture and the principles of nature. Legislators, judges and our citizens need to understand how and why certain methods are used and how agriculture is an essential component in protecting and improving the environment.

Agriculture remains a major contributor to Maine's economy. The Grange firmly supports the family size farm, the backbone of agricultural production, although larger farms continue to have their impact on production and marketing. The environment will continue to cause agricultural concern. Everyone must recognize that farmers are a part of this environment and will do their share to protect it. Americans are fortunate to live in a nation where food cost is reasonable, quality high and its availability excellent. We feel that many consumers recognize that agriculture is an asset in the United States. Producers should have a reasonable profit for their efforts. Industry operates to a large extent on the cost of production as a major factor in determining marketable prices, while agriculture does not. Urban sprawl, land use and assessments, and use of chemicals all will increasingly demand attention.

### **Animals**

#### Animal Rights

1. We oppose any attempts for animal rights, which would put livestock production in the hand of an advisory board and take them away from livestock producers.

### **Beef**

#### Beef Production

1. We support beef production programs designed to increase the profitability of beef farmers.

### **Chemicals**

#### Use of Chemicals

1. We encourage the United States Department of Agriculture, State Agriculture Departments, the Chemical Companies, the Farm Industry and our Land Grant Universities to appropriate funds and work together to eliminate any unnecessary over use of chemicals that will pollute water supplies and cause health hazards to farm workers and to the consuming public, by researching other methods of farming, that might eliminate these hazards, such as reduced chemical farming.
2. We urge that no certification for use of chemicals in production, storage or processing of food be made without using "Risk-Benefit" concept, and that allowable presence of chemicals should be set at a reasonable level.
3. We favor regulations on imported foods that are consistent with American regulations on use of pesticides when growing and shipping foods to our market.

### **Dairy**

#### General Dairy Issues

1. Bovine Somatotrophin (bovine Growth Hormone=bGH): Until such time that research firmly proves that there is no possible adverse effect on humans or animals, (or adverse effects that the consumer may perceive), we oppose the use of bGH.
2. Dairy Surplus: Each region should be responsible for taking care of its own surplus.
3. We urge our Congress people to put pressure on the USDA to raise the support price of milk to a more realistic level for the protection of both the producer and the consumer.
4. We support the Farmer's "Bill of Rights" which would make it illegal for handlers to use "unfair practices" in coercing farmers to have them handle their milk.
5. We oppose misleading commercials, which imply that dairy farm families support the use of non-dairy products.

## **County Fairs**

1. We favor a portion of the funds for the promotion of tourism be specified for promoting Agricultural Fairs, which in turn promotes tourism.

## **Agricultural Disasters**

1. We support the "Agriculture Disaster Area Revolving Fund" in Maine to provide farmers with low interest loans in time of major disaster.

## **Other**

1. We oppose any recommendations or proposed regulations that would remove milk from school lunch programs.

## **Farmland Preservation**

We favor the Family Farmland Preservation Act or any similar legislation which would preserve and protect family farms by amending the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, thus basing estate taxes on family farms remaining in farming on the basis of farmland values and not on prospective developments values.

### **Incentives**

1. We support allowing farmers to invest farm sale income from real and personal property into tax-deferred accounts (such as IRA'S) to be used for their retirement.

### **Development Rights**

2. We support legislation which would increase the amount of available funding from the Federal Government for local governments to purchase easements or development rights from farmers to aid in the maintaining of viable productive farmland.
3. We support bond issues which would fund the Farmland Preservation Program through the Land for Maine's Future Board.

### **Eminent Domain**

1. We support passage of legislation that would: a. prohibit the use of eminent domain by utilities to acquire actively used productive agricultural land unless the utility demonstrates to the Public Utilities Commission that there is an actual immediate need; b. prohibit the purchase of agricultural land by utilities unless the agreement provides, in binding form, that the farmer, his successors and assigns have a right to use the land for agricultural purposes; such right to continue until immediate need for such land is demonstrated by the utility to the Public Utilities Commission for the use of such land; c. provide additional relief as appropriate to protect the rights of farmers to continue agricultural use of their land without harassment, while recognizing the legitimate need of utilities to acquire land for public purposes.
2. We urge legislation be considered and supported to protect agricultural lands from being obtained for use as a landfill.

### **Imported Food**

1. We recommend that legislation be strengthened to require foreign foods and commodities entering the U. S. meet U. S. standards.
2. We encourage the U. S. consumer to purchase the higher quality U. S. farm products rather than imported farm products.

3. We support the introduction of legislation that would require all imported food products in markets/food stores be separated and clearly and prominently labeled as imports and indicating the country of origin.
4. We support the continued efforts for the education of consumers on the possible danger of some of the imported fruits and vegetables and the prosecution of anyone who falsely labels imported as USA grown.
5. We support legislation that would give the Food and Drug Administration and/or the Department of Agriculture, the ability to protect consumers from imports of fruits and vegetables from countries that have unsafe production, handling, sanitation, storage, processing or shipping practices.

### **Utilities**

#### Agriculture Use

1. We encourage the Public Utilities Commission to help lower electricity costs to Maine Farmers, to help reduce their cost of production.

### **Ag Equipment**

#### Ag Exemption-Clean Air Act

1. We support the exemption of agricultural equipment from the emission standards imposed by the Clean Air Act of 1990 and from any other proposed California type emission standards that other states may enact.

### **Crops**

#### Forestry Crops

1. We urge that all forestry grown crops in Maine be declared, by law, an agricultural commodity.

#### Organic Food

1. We support a set of national standards for organically produced food such as those in the Organic Foods Production act of 1990 that would provide this type of food to the public wishing to purchase such food, also to protect the markets for those farmers wishing to sustain the land under this type of farming.
2. We do not support any changes to the organic standards that would allow the use of chemicals and synthetic materials, including the use of sewage sludge, in the growing of certified organically grown crops.

#### Genetically Modified Foods

1. We oppose the use of Terminator Technology and other types of genetic engineering in agricultural plant and animal production until it is scientifically proven safe and beneficial

#### Labels

2. We support legislation to require genetically modified food to be labeled.

#### Community Based Local Food Production

1. The Maine State Grange supports legislation recognizing municipalities' authority to regulate by ordinance the direct producer-to-customer exchange all food grown, harvested, prepared, processed or produced in the municipality.

### **Regulations**

#### Permits

1. We oppose legislation requiring permits to apply manure on fields as fertilizer.

#### Pesticide/Herbicide Use

1. We encourage the EPA to base any decisions on pesticide/herbicide regulations changes only on sound scientific data.

## **Agribusiness**

### Development

1. We support legislation that will enhance rural revitalization, agribusiness development and micro enterprise funding by supporting the creation of a rural revitalization program; creation of an agribusiness development micro enterprise revolving fund; and the economic development of farm related business.

## **Conservation**

Good stewardship of the land is important for the success of a farmer. Land is a vital resource and it must be protected, nurtured and shared. Farmland must be protected as private land. Voluntary action administered by local governments is best whenever possible. The floods in the Mid-west in the spring and summer of 1993 emphasized the need for adequate conservation programs to protect this resource. When programs that affect our air, water and land resources are legislated it must not be done solely at the expense of agriculture.

### Regulations

1. We oppose any legislative changes that would weaken regulations regarding the protection of air, water and soil from further contamination, and favor enforcement of present rules to protect the health and welfare of people in areas where they live and work .

## **Government**

### Land Acquisition

1. We recommend that no funding be provided for the buying of land to protect open space or any other land acquisition for environmental purposes in Maine until the state has brought state spending and the state budget within fiscal constraints and the ability of the state taxpayers to fund such projects.
2. We recommend a review by the State Legislature of the State Land

### Purchasing Policy.

1. We support a moratorium on federal acquisition of land for any National Forest until the Federal Government adopts a new plan for payment in lieu of taxes that is fair to the local taxpayers.
2. We oppose the passing of the Northern Forest Stewardship Act or any other large scale Government land acquisition.

### Agencies & Commissions

1. We support the following policies of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife: a. Control of Moose Hunting b. Control of Animal Harvesting (Trapping) c. Control of Doe (only) Hunting.

### Legal Issues

1. We oppose legislation which would allow individuals to initiate civil suits against farmers and others for environmental violations without having to show any direct loss or damage to initiate such a suit.
2. We support legislation which would protect landowners from lawsuits and medical claims by trespassers engaging in recreational activities on private lands.

### Property Owners Rights

1. We oppose any legislation that infringes on the individual property owners rights.

## **Land Use**

### EPA Regulations

1. We support legislation that would change the proposed EPA Regulation on farm runoff to a more practical and manageable level that would not force farms out of business.

### Mining

1. We support legislation that would ensure that home rule prevails as related to commercial mining operations permits.

### Forestry

1. We support the development of a state park management plan for each park which would identify and protect environmentally sensitive plant and animal areas, designate public use areas and provide for management and harvest of woodland areas using approved best management practices and that proceeds received from the sale of harvested timber be used for maintenance and development of that park operation.

### Public Lands

1. We favor legislation that would prevent the sale or lease of public assets to private individuals or corporations for profit making enterprises without safeguards insuring that the government would receive equitable reimbursement for use.

### Wetland

1. We recommend that legislation be introduced for compensation to land owners for loss of income potential and property taxes paid on the land, the use of which has been denied because of wetland regulations. We support legislation which would insure that just compensation was paid to landowners for the loss of value of their lands when it is designated as wetland.

## **Waterways**

### Rivers

1. We support legislation that would require violators to begin whatever method would be most effective in cleaning up contamination of our rivers, by dredging or some other equitable method.

### Use

1. We would support laws that allows individual lake associations to regulate speed zones and shore distances on their local lakes

## **Parks**

### Funds

1. We urge all monies collected from visitors to our National Parks go into a dedicated fund for the staffing and maintenance of all National Parks so that they are preserved for visitor's enjoyment and education for all time.

## **Wildlife**

### Dedicated Funds

1. We support Maine in allocating the proceeds of hunting, fishing and trapping licenses solely for purposes of wildlife management and enforcement of conservation laws.

### Animal Control

1. We favor the use of current effective control methods regarding the destruction of land and crops by wild turkeys similar to those used for deer control.
2. We support changes to laws so that the owners of dangerous and/or vicious animals would be held criminally liable for the actions of these animals,
3. We encourage local leash laws to be more strictly enforced.



## Controlled Hunting

1. We oppose the promotion of coyotes in Maine and support a year-round open season on coyotes.

## Endangered Species

1. We urge that legislation be enacted to prevent abuses of the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
2. We support legislation which would legally allow people to defend themselves from an attack by any animal without concern of retribution from government authorities.

## Species Reintroduction

1. We oppose the reintroduction of wolves into the State of Maine.

## **Hunting**

### Attire

1. We support the law that requires hunters to wear 40% or more body coverage of blaze orange during deer hunting season

### Legal Age

1. We oppose lowering of the present age limit of 16 for obtaining hunting licenses.

### Safety Zones

1. We support legislation that would increase the distance from 500 to 1,000 feet from school buildings or playgrounds for the illegal discharging of a fire arms or long bow.

### Deer Population Control

1. We would encourage that the regulation be changed to allow more antler less deer to be harvested to better control the herds in certain areas of the state.

## **Recycling**

### Programs

1. We support the implementation of recycling programs as a method of reducing solid waste and conserving and protecting natural resources.
2. We request the State of Maine to encourage manufacturing companies and distributors of products for sale in Maine to immediately curtail the practice of over-packaging products, that all packaging materials be modified to be more easily recycled and to assist the consumer and municipalities by offering to recycle those consumer products when such products can no longer be used.

### Packaging

1. We favor the use of only biodegradable and/or recyclable materials for all food packaging including prepared foods, even though the cost of this packaging may be slightly higher.
2. We favor research that would significantly reduce the amount of non-recyclable packaging for sale and/or use in Maine.
3. We favor the use of a new recloseable plastic soda-style packaging for milk, and encourage any advertising, which will boost milk sales.

### Materials

1. We favor requirements that would make virtually all packaging materials distributed in the State of Maine be of a recyclable nature and that all local and county recycling centers be required to accelerate acceptance of all recyclable materials.
2. We recommend that the Federal Government support the development of private markets and use for recyclable materials.

## Bottle Law

1. We support the retention of the Bottle Deposit Law.
2. We support legislation to be enacted to include all single serving beverage containers whether plastic, glass and metal in the Bottle and Can Deposit Law.

## Disposal

### Hazardous Waste

1. We support the State of Maine's policy that brings together rational and viable processes for the disposal of hazardous wastes in Maine.
2. We support the imposition of stiffer penalties and fines for improper disposal of hazardous materials, and that revenues generated by such penalties and fines be used for environmental clean-up.
3. We support legislation that prevents entrance of any radioactive wastes into the State of Maine for dumping purposes.
4. We request that the State of Maine and National Agricultural Departments review the problem of hazardous wastes being added to fertilizers and to implement laws that would outlaw this practice before our agricultural land is damaged beyond repair.

### Sewage

1. We support legislation that would completely ban the use of raw sewage as a fertilizer on crops for human consumption.

### Importation

1. We oppose the importing of garbage from any other state or country.

## General Issues

### Fire Towers

1. We urge the State of Maine to find a source for funds to keep the existing fire towers in good condition, consider using Maine Forestry School students as a source of manpower during the summer months to maintain and provide public information about the area, the mountains and lakes around fire towers and work in conjunction with the State of Maine Tourism Department to promote these fire towers.

### Roadside Litter

1. We urge the Legislature to impose larger penalties on apprehended litterbugs and that a portion of these funds received be apportioned to the various local governments to aid them in roadside litter abatement.

## Education

We continue to seek proposals to change the way we fund our schools. Everyone agrees that something must be done to relieve the burden of property taxes, especially for those who are on a fixed income. We must, however, be mindful of whatever changes are enacted, that they are fair and equitable for all school district residents. Mandates continue to impact our school district. More than 80% of a school district's budget is mandated by the state. Taxpayers have no control over this portion of the budget, but it is one of the many factors that lead to the many defeats of school district budgets. We should continue our efforts to seek mandate relief. One way that may help is to allow school districts to refuse mandates if they do not affect the current student population. Another way is to work for legislation which would prevent implementation of any mandate unless fully funded by the governing body that originated it. We will continue to work with other organizations, to better influence positive changes in our educational system both rural and urban.

## School Consolidation

1. We are opposed to any legislation that allows the centralized consolidation of local schools without local voter approval.

## General Funding

### Lottery

1. We urge the Maine State Legislature to pass legislation requiring that when the lottery prizes have not been claimed during the time limit, this money should be turned over to education.

### Mandate Relief

1. We support any legislation that eliminates outdated, or unfounded state mandates on school districts.
2. We support legislation which allows a school district to refuse any unfunded mandate which do not affect the current student/teacher population.
3. We support the concept of legislation which would allow a school district to lease facilities when there is a temporary need for more classrooms and to receive state building aid for lease costs.
4. We support the review and elimination of mandates that are not truly of value to the education of the children.

### Alternate Funding

1. We support seeking alternative sources to property tax funding of public schools. Before we can fully support one alternative over another, the proposal should include the following: a. that no additional taxes are created in trying to seek an alternative to a property tax; b. that an increase in the alternative proposal is met with an equal decrease in the property tax; c. that any proposal must be implemented on a statewide basis, not as an option for each district; d. any proposal for alternative funding should reduce or eliminate any inequities in the sharing of the tax burden; e. the existing administration be used to oversee the distribution of funds, not creating a new bureaucracy.

## School Budgets

### Voting

1. We oppose school boards presenting the same budget if that budget has been defeated and that significant changes be made before that budget can be presented again.

### State Aid

1. We urge the Maine State Legislature and all advisory boards and commissions, to carefully study and analyze the special needs and circumstances of rural school districts when developing state aid formulas, mandates, laws and regulations.
2. We support legislation stating that if a state budget has not been adopted by the beginning of the fiscal year, school districts will automatically receive state aid funding equal to the previous year. When a budget has been approved, adjustments and corrections of fund received will be made between school districts and the state.
3. School districts should have more flexibility in spending their allocated aid where it will be most beneficial to the school district.

## School Requirement

### Length of School Year

1. We oppose any legislation promoting a 12- month school year.

## Language

1. We oppose the Bi-Lingual Education Act.
2. We support the offering of American Sign Language as an option for the second language requirement in high schools when there is a suitable number of students interested in taking the course, and request the state allow American Sign Language be accepted as an option for the second language requirement for high school graduation.
3. We oppose any legislation which would allow federal or state funds to be used for Black English (Ebonics) as a second language, reaffirming our position that English should be our primary language.
4. We oppose any proposal that would allow high school students to take regents exams in languages printed other than English, except for second language option regents courses.

## Children's Age to Leave School

1. We urge the State of Maine Legislature to initiate legislation requiring children to remain in school until graduation or the age of 18.

## Life Skills Education

1. If a student is not college bound, vocational programs should be provided so the student can pursue life and citizenship skills to better prepare them for the future.
2. We strongly favor legislation that would allow schools to initiate a youth apprenticeship program, privately funded through donations from local businesses, with the criteria for eligibility set by local school districts, to aid students in basic education and training for an occupation through actual work experience.

## Certification

1. We encourage the state to encourage Maine colleges and universities that currently have courses of study in deaf education certification and communications disorders to develop programs of study for certification of teachers of American Sign Language.
2. We support granting teacher certification in American Sign Language as a second language to persons not part of the deaf culture, but who after extensive study and social interaction with the deaf, may be a part of the deaf community in a given geographical area.

## Ag in the Classroom

1. We support maintaining adequate funding for the program of "Ag in the Classroom" so as to give students and the public an awareness of the importance of agriculture in their lives and the economy of the state and nation.
2. We support legislation that would support Agriculture Education initiatives and its components of agricultural literacy, secondary (High School) agricultural education, agricultural youth leadership, Urban agricultural education and post-secondary education.

## **Transportation**

### School Buses

1. We support the use of closed circuit television on school district buses to identify and improve the safety and behavior of students.

## **Financial Aid**

### Federal

1. We oppose Federal Budget proposals which severely eliminates funding for many of the current federal financial aid programs that assist college students.

## State

1. We urge the Governor and the Legislators to continue to make educational opportunities available to a high proportion of Maine's youth through the State University system by keeping tuition costs reasonable, and developing student aid programs that will enable serious students to complete a college education.
2. We support employment incentives that could be promoted by the Maine State Government, be inclusive of many critically needed professions, such as teaching, healthcare, and agriculture, that are in short supply and would affect the quality of life for the people of this state.

## School Breakfast

1. School districts are encouraged to enact school breakfast programs, which have been proven to be beneficial to the students.

## Safe Pedestrian Program

1. We encourage the teaching in elementary schools of the rules of being a safe pedestrian, through a voluntary program sponsored by local police departments, such as is done by local fire departments on fire safety.

## **Health**

The Maine State Grange is taking an active role to raise public awareness of problems in the health care field, especially the unique needs of the rural community. We, as an organization, should actively work with other rural agencies and organizations to make everyone aware of these problems and to work to help find possible solutions. Ever rising health care costs mean that more people are unable to afford adequate health care for themselves and their families. Experience has shown that most government sponsored and administered programs have not been effective. The Grange will continue to be an active participant in all health care reform debates. Areas which continue to need our attention are long term care and catastrophic illness insurance coverage, the protection of personal assets and financial savings to pay for long term care and Medicare reforms. Medicaid is another government program which consumes a large share of taxpayer money. An effort must be made to contain the cost of the Medicaid program. Emphasis should be placed on preventive or "well-care" services rather than illness or "need-care" services. More emphasis needs to be placed on the Department of Human Services to thoroughly review unnecessary, experimental or high-risk treatments unless medically documented as life saving. This will help to control the ever increasing costs of this program. Currently, one of the most controversial issues facing us as an organization and as a nation, is that of abortion. The Grange believes that this is a personal decision for individuals and should remain as such.

## **Research**

### Lyme Disease

1. We support efforts in research for more effective diagnosing and treatment of Lyme Disease.

### Repetitive Motion Injuries

1. We support an increase in funding for research into repetitive motion injuries to people who use wheelchairs for mobility and training on the use of wheelchairs for the people who may be first time users to decrease these types of injuries. We encourage manufacturers to study ergonomic changes to wheelchairs to aid in reducing repetitive motion injuries to people who use wheelchairs.

## **Regulations**

### Smoking

1. We urge more stringent controls be imposed to slow the recruitment of new tobacco users.

## Marijuana

1. The Maine State Grange states its opposition to the efforts to legalize marijuana in Maine for recreational purposes.

## **Primary Care**

### Health Care Reform Policy

1. The Grange urges that the following be considered in any health care reform proposals that are put forth: a. legislation that would insure universal access to health care for everyone regardless of age, race, income or location; b. any costs to businesses, employees or individuals be kept within a reasonable cost structure; c. include coverage for extended care and/or in-home care for the elderly; d. support tax benefits to employers providing health insurance to employees and individuals who acquire their own health insurance.

## **Hospitals**

### Closings

1. We oppose the continued pressure placed on small hospitals to limit their services.  
2. We encourage Congress to support legislation which would prevent the closing of rural hospitals from possible amendments to Medicare statutes which cause difficulties for health care facilities that have less than 100 beds.

### Patients Rights

1. We support legislation to protect the rights of patients by receiving care from only qualified, licensed nurses when the procedure necessitates.

## **Doctors**

### Physician Placement

1. We support efforts made that will aid in recruiting physicians for rural areas that are under served.

### Malpractice Reform

1. We favor an amendment to the current law, which would require hospitals, medical clinics and doctors reveal to patients and/or their families any errors in treatment immediately.

## **Insurance**

### Catastrophic Insurance

1. We urge Congress to find a fair and equitable solution to the tragic problem of the lack of adequate health insurance coverage for catastrophic illness.

### Health Insurance

1. We support legislation that would require insurance carriers to offer for dependent children, up to age 19, that would include well-child check-ups, immunizations and regularly scheduled physicals.  
2. We support legislation that would encourage testing for hearing impairments in children from birth up to and including age 3 and for hearing aids for children as part of any health care reform plan.  
3. We support current regulations that require insurance companies to cover all federal, state or hospital by-law mandated medical services.

### Residency Requirement

1. We support a minimum residency requirement be included in any health or drug plan for all State of Maine residents to eliminate any abuse by out-of-state residents without health insurance coming to the state, increasing the burden on state taxpayers.

## **Medicare/Medicaid**

### **Payment**

1. We oppose legislation calling for further reduction in reimbursements by Medicare for durable medical equipment.
2. We support reforms in Medicaid reimbursements to encourage home care for those who can adequately function in a home care setting which would reduce the amount of Medicaid spending for institutionalized long term care.
3. We strongly support legislation that would discourage doctors from discontinuing Medicare assignment for specific diagnosis while treating Medicare patient.
4. We urge Medicare to review its payment schedule and make changes which recognize recommended and accepted medical procedures.
5. We urge State and Federal agencies to be more aggressive in their investigation of fraud, waste and abuse within the Medicare and Medicaid systems.

## **Programs**

### **Substance Abuse**

1. We favor retention of drug and alcohol treatment programs and services at state operated facilities and expansion of the same where facilities and financing are available.

### **Long Term Care**

1. We support long term care home health care programs.

### **Gambling**

1. We oppose gambling and support existing programs aimed at reducing gambling.

### **Prescriptions**

1. We oppose any legislation requiring a pharmacist to include on prescription drug labels the condition for which it is prescribed.
2. We support legislation to control the cost of drugs and health care by elimination the discrepancy in drug prices and fraud in the health care industry.
3. We support a prescription drug plan that would negotiate lower drug prices for everyone who is not covered by an existing plan, State of Maine's Prescription Plan.

## **Labor and Judiciary**

In a recent poll, crime is number one on the list of concerns of Americans today. The use of drugs continues its adverse effects, violence has entered into the education system and penalties cannot be agreed upon. The cost of operating the penal system and lawyer fees are skyrocketing. The President has asked Congress for legislation to address these issues. The Grange fully supports this need. Job growth is needed to enable American workers to be competitive with other major industrial powers. Mandates issued by judicial proclamation, executive orders and legislative action must be curtailed. The Grange mandate program needs expanding and strengthening.

## **Crime**

### **Drug Dealers**

1. We support legislation which authorizes the seizure of assets in a single criminal proceeding resulting in a conviction for a drug related felony and that when multiple family dwellings are taken in a seizure, those families indirectly involved be given reasonable time to seek alternate housing.

## Penal Reform

1. We recommend stricter enforcement of existing penalties regarding rape, especially for repeat offenders.
2. We recommend a major change in the penal system, with the following changes being mandatory for reducing crime: a. life for convicted first degree murderers and killers of law enforcement officers with no parole; b. no temporary insanity pleas; c. Those convicted of violent crimes must serve out their full sentence, no early parole; d. cases involving murder and the sale of illegal drugs cannot be thrown out of court in a procedural technicality; e. legislation stating that criminals who use deadly weapons in the commission of a crime serve a minimum sentence of ten years in prison without parole; f. invoking mandatory sentences for the use of a gun in violent or drug related crime; g. elimination or restricting the use of plea bargaining and/or early release on furloughs for violent criminals.
3. We support legislation which would make modifications to the youthful offender status program as follows: a. to allow fingerprinting for identification of first offense, 13 to 15 year olds; said fingerprint record to be retained, not destroyed; b. to allow the sealed record of the youthful offender to be opened if a crime is committed by that person within ten years of the adjudication; c. youthful offender status determination would not be allowed after the first conviction; d. youthful offenders who commit violent crimes would be required to serve adult sentences.
4. We support a law that would require all convicted rapist and sex offenders to provide a DNA sample to be kept on record to protect the rights of possible victims.

## Penalties

### Liability Law Suits

1. We favor a system in which the losing party will be responsible to pay the winner's legal and court costs.

### OUI (Operating under the Influence)

1. We support higher penalties for OUI and we recommend strict judicial enforcement of the new OUI penalties
2. We support legislation which would close existing loopholes and allow proper punishment for persons who commit act of OUI with no plea bargaining.
3. We support legislation that would initiate civil forfeiture proceedings against a driver for a third felony-level OUI offense with the past 5 years.

### Alcohol

1. We support stiffer penalties and no plea bargaining for repeat offenders of underage consumption of alcohol.

## Prison/Prisoners

### Work release

1. We support the State of Maine using manpower from those incarcerated in minimum security prisons wherever practical for public work.

### Profiteering

1. We are opposed to criminals receiving any money for the rights to their story and that any offered should go to their victim's families and/or to pay court costs that they, the criminals, have incurred.

### Salaries

1. We encourage Congress to investigate the purported payment of salaries and benefits to prisoners convicted of crimes of any kind and take action to eliminate this practice.



## Lawsuits

1. We support legislative action which would curtail the filing of costly, frivolous lawsuits by prison inmates. 2. We support legislation that would prevent anyone committing a crime from bringing civil lawsuit against a victim or a concerned citizen who might injure anyone committing a crime while defending themselves or trying to prevent a criminal act.

## Rights

1. We request the Maine State Legislature to repeal the "Right to Privacy" laws for criminals, allowing public access to criminal records, including prison disciplinary actions and transfers and that victims and police be notified of escapes, impending paroles, furloughs or other releases of convicts.

## **Miscellaneous**

### Veterans Benefits

1. We oppose any changes in the Disabled American Veterans Compensation schedule to reduce or curtail benefits.

### International Affairs Monetary Fund

1. We support the U. S. Government placing funds in the International Monetary Fund for exportation of agricultural commodities from the United States.

## **Language**

### English as Official Language

1. We support Federal legislation designating English as the official language of the United States.

## **Gun Control/Regulations**

### Federal Gun Laws

1. We urge Congress to uphold our civil rights to keep and bear arms as guaranteed by the Second Amendment of the U. S. Constitution.

## **Prayer & Patriotism**

### Flag

1. We oppose any form of desecration of the American Flag.
2. We support a constitutional amendment to protect the American Flag.

### Prayer/Pledge of Allegiance

1. We support the right of children to voluntarily participate in prayer in public schools.
2. We oppose all attempts to eliminate Christmas displays and/or songs pertaining to this holiday.
3. We support an interpretation of the U. S. Constitution which allows schools, or any other governmental authority, to permit religious prayer as a part of any function.
4. We support that members of the United States Congress should reciting the Pledge of Allegiance prior to the start of their daily sessions.

## **Postal Service**

### Service

1. We favor the maintenance of Saturday mail service and rural delivery by the Postal Service.

### Rates

1. We oppose any increase in first class postage rates.
2. We favor the retention of Bulk Mail Class for not-for-profit organizations at a reasonable rate.
3. We urge the appointed directors of the United States Postal Service to be more responsible in the management of any surplus funds to keep the cost of postage constant.

## **Metric System**

### Changing to the Metric System

1. We oppose any mandatory conversion to the metric system.

## **Federal Elections**

### Election Media Coverage

1. We favor the elimination of all national election projections and results until polls are closed in all states.

### Reform of Campaign Finance Laws

1. We support our elected officials in reforming campaign finance laws and encourage campaigns to be limited to four months prior to the primary and general elections.

## **United Nations Programs**

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

## **Native Americans Land Claims**

1. We support the Indian Land Claim as written. We do not support any changes by the Federal Government or State Legislature that would add any additional items or powers.

## **Emergency Phone Number Display**

1. We urge that the telephone number of the local emergency services be conspicuously displayed on or near each public telephone for use in emergencies.

