



Gubernatorial Candidate

Nan Whaley

Democrat

What is the main priority of your administration?

I'm running for governor because I believe Ohio deserves better. For essentially 30 years, we've had one party rule in our state and, during that time, we've watched as Ohio has fallen further and further behind. Our only path forward is a total overhaul - and that's what I am proposing.

My message is pretty simple: I want your pay to go up, your bills to go down, and your government to work for you. That includes raising wages by investing in the jobs of the future, tackling inflation by temporarily suspending the gas tax and cracking down on price gouging, and finally cleaning up corruption at the Statehouse.

This is how we make Ohio a place where one good job is enough, where every community is safe and healthy, and where your kids and grandkids have real opportunities.

What do you see as the main challenges & opportunities for agriculture in Ohio?

Current challenges facing agriculture in Ohio include supply chain issues, land ownership retention, and infrastructure development such as broadband. One of the most pressing challenges facing Ohio farmers has been the supply chain issues in the wake of the pandemic. From supply bottlenecks, delivery delays, and increased production costs, I know farmers have been significantly impacted by supply-chain disruptions.

Another challenge for Ohio agriculture is that a majority of Ohio farmland is rented to farm operators rather than owned by the operator. As metropolitan regions expand outward, new sites for development are often on farmland. With fewer acres of farmland, development pressure rises and drives up both rent and real estate prices. As a result, the price to rent farmland increases. Since most of Ohio's farmland is owned by nonoperator landowners, there must be a strategic effort to ensure Ohio farmers can protect farmland and maintain Ohio's strong position as a top agricultural production state.

In light of these challenges, Ohio's farmers have been resilient and innovative in their business operations. There is an opportunity to advocate for reforms that recognize the diversity of the agricultural industry in the state for farmers to continue their operations. This effort can be



furthered by supporting the development of businesses that produce value-added products from locally grown agricultural goods and services.

Finally, I know that broadband development is crucial to the economic viability of Ohio communities. I support initiatives that bring infrastructure and affordable broadband and high speed internet access to unserved and underserved parts of the state. This also includes obtaining resources to rebuild, repair, and modernize transportation infrastructure to improve supply chain logistics. An important initiative of my administration will be to conduct an accurate statewide assessment of broadband connectivity to demonstrate the deep need in rural Ohio to help outline a plan for action.

What steps can be taken to prevent food supply disruptions in Ohio?

Transportation that connects rural communities throughout Ohio are critical to the growth and prosperity of the state. Many residents undertake lengthy commutes both to and for their jobs. Ohioans need access to affordable rural transit for access to healthcare and other vital services.

With an expanding non-farm population and increased residential development, the long-term viability of farm operations is vulnerable without public policy solutions to promote and preserve local farms. These steps would include assessing the feasibility of a rural transit system, including a rail corridor, connecting rural areas to urban cores, which can provide less expensive forms of transportation for longer-distance travel.

Furthermore, I will call on the PUCO to commission a study to look at the feasibility of a subsidy program with utilities to boost the transition to electric vehicles so that rural farmers, public transit systems, construction trades, and other workers with long commutes can afford more efficient electric vehicles and stop sinking considerable shares of the family budget into the high cost of gas.

What strategies can be deployed to ensure the next generation of agricultural producers are well-positioned to serve Ohio's needs and growing population?

Greater land competition leads to rising property values, creating a higher-cost environment in order to remain financially sustainable. This has been documented in how farm operations have adapted physically, technologically, and financially to remain sustainable. These include adaptations like greenhouses and nurseries, value-added goods like agritourism, and selling goods on their property or at local farmer's markets as additional revenue sources to meet their cost and tax liabilities.

In an effort to preserve Ohio farmland, I am open to modernizing the Current Agricultural Use Value (CAUV) formula used to determine property taxes on farmland to include additional



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factors impacting farm owners that are currently not included in the formula design. The Department of Taxation (DOT) agricultural advisory committee can assist in evaluating these developments and recommend solutions for future value setting of soil type values.

Farm operations located in proximity to suburban and urban development encounter additional burdens not currently reflected in the CAUV formula. These burdens include but are not limited to soil health, wildlife, weather patterns, access to markets, competition with farm economies of scale, start-up costs, access to technical assistance, marketing costs, and nonfarm relations. These factors exceed the bounds of the current formula, but they are critical to the operations of farms located on the fringe of suburban and urban localities.

I suggest these factors be considered when establishing CAUV values. These factors exceed the bounds of the current formula, but they are critical to the operations of farms located on the fringe of suburban and urban localities.

The purpose of the CAUV program is to assist farmers that face increased economic pressures to convert their land to other uses. The CAUV formula provides significant assistance to Ohio's farmers, but the formula has not evolved from its original form to account for the dynamics associated with farming near metropolitan centers. Based on the original intent of the program, reforming the formula to account for these changes strengthens and enhances the program's purpose.

Lastly, I will explore options to assist young and beginning farmers with financial and regulatory hurdles to make Ohio agriculture attractive and accessible for the long term. Many new jobs in today's agriculture economy are tied to the kind of training that occurs at career technical schools and agricultural education programs. Expanding both availability and access to these educational programs will help place Ohio's farm economy in a strong position to continue being a leading agricultural production state. I also know that childcare and healthcare costs can be especially challenging for young farmers. My administration will prioritize lowering costs for both - especially in rural communities.

What do you see as gaps in the protections for Ohio landowners, and how can those gaps be filled?

Ohio lags the nation in the amount of farmers that own their land, and a low ownership rate poses financial problems for local farmers. I would lead efforts in reevaluating eminent domain reform, streamlined judicial procedures and agricultural easement program enforcement. I would also seek stronger requirements for local government use of private land for projects that impact agricultural land, such as rails-to-trails projects.



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How will your administration continue to expand opportunities for those in agriculture to promote best land management practices?

I believe that regulatory approaches must work closely with Ohio's agriculture leaders. Under my administration, the Department of Agriculture (DOA) will work with our state's farmers in collaboration with the Ohio Farm Bureau and other organizations to assess the economic and agronomic impacts of the H2Ohio program's Best Management Practices (BMPs). The goal will be to evaluate current conservation practices that are being implemented across Ohio in order to improve our data collection. This will allow state and local leaders, along with farmers, to make informed policy making.

This is another place where expanded broadband can play an important role in helping farmers better monitor their fertilizer use - which will both save them money and help decrease runoff and algae blooms.

With my experience in local government, I will work to ensure farmers across Ohio have prompt and efficient means of communicating with their local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) who administer the H2Ohio program at the county level. It will be a key priority of my administration that state agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture, communicate and work closely with local governments and leaders in the farming community to ensure state regulations permit farmers to operate with minimal burdens while also protecting the environment from dangerous pollution.