

## Agricultural Issues on the Ballot: A Case Study of the 2009 Ohio Issue 2 Campaign

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This in-depth case study explored the marketing of the November 2009 ballot initiative that created the Ohio Livestock Care Standards board. Key individuals who were involved in communications campaigns dealing with the ballot initiative were interviewed and media coverage was closely analyzed. The interviews examined questions dealing with the origin of the initiative, the types of media used to promote it, the budget for the media campaign and which types of media were viewed as the most valuable and successful. The information obtained reveals which types of media are most effective in reaching consumers about agricultural issues according to campaign organizers. By examining a successful agricultural communications campaign, insight can be gained about how other groups can best reach the public and persuade them to support legislation benefiting the agricultural industry.

### **Keywords**

ballot initiatives, media campaigns, legislation, case study

# Agricultural issues on the ballot: A case study of the 2009 Ohio issue 2 campaign

*Hannah Thompson and Emily Rhoades-Buck*

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## **Introduction**

Agricultural issues are appearing on state ballots with increasing frequency, and this poses a challenge to agricultural organizations as they try to reach out to the voting public. These organizations must design and implement media campaigns to encourage a favorable outcome from the election. As agricultural organizations and commodity groups are not typically well funded, it is key for them to understand the most cost-effective media strategies to utilize. In the early months of 2009, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) called for a meeting with Ohio livestock organizations, including the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, Ohio Pork Producers Council and the Ohio Cattleman's Association. During this 'meeting of the minds' HSUS president and chief executive officer Wayne Pacelle announced HSUS' intention to come to Ohio with a ballot initiative similar to "The Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act" also known as Proposition 2, which had recently been passed in California. That legislation "requires that calves raised for veal, egg-laying hens and pregnant pigs be confined only in ways that allow these animals to lie down, stand up, fully extend their limbs and turn around freely" (Anti-Cruelty: Related Statutes, 2010, pg. 6).

To be proactive in the face of this future legislation, these agricultural groups formed the Ohio for Livestock Care political action committee and formed the idea for the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board (OLCSB), which would be an unbiased group of industry experts responsible for overseeing livestock care in Ohio. The measure resoundingly passed with 64% of the vote (Elections & Ballot Issues, 2009). Undoubtedly, the pro-Issue 2 media campaign can be categorized as a success. This study thus aimed to explore the initiative from inception to passage, with the major focus

on the media campaign conducted by the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation in its effort to promote the issue and other groups' campaigns to defeat the measure. This information should serve very useful to other state agricultural organizations as they look to pass similar legislation in their states, or to any group attempting to create a media campaign around an agricultural ballot initiative.

### **Significance and Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was thus to analyze the pro-Issue 2 media campaign during the 2009 Ohio general election. The study focused mainly on the activities of the Ohio for Livestock Care political action committee (PAC), the only PAC registered with the Ohio Department of State as spending funds for an Issue 2 campaign (Ohio Department of State, 2011). Through this study, important strategies for ballot initiative campaigns are revealed.

This study aligned with Research Priority 1 of the National Research Agenda for Agricultural Education and Communication, that aims to understand public and policy maker's understanding about agricultural and natural resources and ensuring consumers make informed choices (Doerfert, 2011). When the public is called upon to impact the future of agriculture by casting its vote on the ballot, it is crucial that it is fully armed with all of the tools to make an informed decision. Through this study, the best methods of reaching the public with information about agricultural ballot initiatives was determined, helping the industry to make wise choices regarding spending and investing in communication methods.

### **Objectives of the Study**

After reviewing relevant literature, additional, specific goals were outlined. These objectives, listed below, helped guide the aim of the study and the collection and analysis of data.

1. To examine the financial report of the Ohio for Livestock Care PAC, including contributions and expenditures;
2. To determine the key messages of the media campaign and how key personnel rate their effectiveness;
3. To review media coverage of the campaign and examine shifts in tone.

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **History of the Animal Rights Movement in the United States**

The origins of the animal rights movement are apparent even earlier than the United States itself. The 1641 "Body of Liberties" of the Massachusetts Bay Colony included two tenants relating to the care of animals: "92. No man shall exercise any Tyranny or Crueltie towards any brute Creature which are usuallie kept for man's use. 93. If any man shall have occasion to leade or drive Cattel from place to place that is far off, so that they be weary, or hungry, or fall sick, or lambe, it shall be lawful to rest or refresh them, for a competent time, in any open place that is not Corne, meadow, or inclosed for some peculiar use" (Beers, 2006). This was the earliest known law in this section of the world that dealt with the treatment of livestock (Beers, 2006). In England, articles appeared in newspapers denouncing cockfights and other bloodsports as early as 1749 (Beers, 2006).

Europe has been at the forefront of animal protection legislation, with the first law passing in 1822 (Radford, 1996). This legislation, titled 'An Act to Prevent the Cruel and Improper Treatment

of Cattle,' later becoming known as Martin's Act, protected cattle, horses, sheep, and mules from excessive cruelty (Beers, 2006). The roots of the animal protection movement in Europe can be seen in the writings of Jeremy Bentham, whose 1789 *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* directly applied the concept of rights to animals, in conflict with the traditional view of animals as lacking feeling or thought (Beers, 2006).

The legal protection of animals in Europe continued to increase over time, with the 1957 Treaty of Rome, which dealt with concerns for animal protections and the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, which provided revisions to the Treaty of Rome, including expanded animal protection measures (Sullivan, Vietzke, & Coyne, 2008). Other animal protection legislation included the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act, Animal Health Act, and Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations (Radford, 1996). More recently, politicians have banned veal crates (Sullivan et al., 2008). The success of animal care legislation in Europe has inspired similar movements around the world.

In 1828, New York passed legislation defining wanton cruelty toward a domesticated animal as a misdemeanor, and in 1835 Massachusetts followed suit (Beers, 2006). Throughout the 1830s-1850s, newspapers published an increasing number of articles reporting acts of cruelty and editorials denouncing them (Beers, 2006). The growing issues of animal welfare in the United States became organized in 1866 with the formation of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, modeled after the British Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Jasper, 1996).

The two early primary federal regulations in place in the United States regarding animals were the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1901 and the Federal Meat Inspection Act of 1906 (Becker, 2009). The Humane Methods of Slaughter Act regulated that "...livestock must be slaughtered in a humane manner to prevent needless suffering" and called for "research of humane methods of slaughter, the non-applicability of these statutes to religious or ritual slaughter, and the investigation into the care of non-ambulatory livestock" ("Humane Methods," 2009, pg. 1-3). The Federal Meat Inspection Act provided regulations dealing with ante mortem and post mortem inspections, humane methods of slaughter, meat inspections, labeling and other topics (Food Safety Inspection Service, 2009). Most of the early organizations and legislation focused on animal welfare, not animal rights (Francione, 1996).

The animal welfare view assumes that animals can be treated as a means to a human end, provided that standards of care are upheld, while the rights view demands the end of the use of animals for human benefit (Francione, 1996). In the past 30 years, the animal rights movement has come to the forefront and gained strength in American society (Garner, 1996). People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), an animal rights organization, formed in the early 1980s (Jasper, 1996). PETA and fellow animal activist group the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) released videos and photographs from animal research laboratories to the news media throughout the 1980s (Jasper, 1996). The current organization at the center of the animal rights movement is HSUS, formed in 1954 (The Humane Society of the United States, 2009). HSUS, which claims to be backed by 11 million Americans, spent a combined total of almost \$40 million on "strategic communications" and "advocacy and public policy" in 2009 (The Humane Society of the United States, 2009).

### **Trends in Animal Care Legislative Policy**

In a parallel to the escalating nature of the animal rights movement, legislation regarding animal care has increased in number and scope. The Animal Welfare Act, passed originally in 1966, was

intended to "...regulate the transportation, sale and handling of dogs, cats and certain other animals intended to be used for purposes of research or experimentation, and for other purposes" (United States Department of Agriculture, 2009a). The Act has been amended six times, most recently in 2007, and has been expanded to: include all warm-blooded animals being used for experimentation or exhibition set restrictions on animal rights established that an Institutional Care and Use Committee must be in place at institutions of animal experimentation to ensure humane care set requirements of health certifications by a veterinarian and created holding periods for shelter animals (United States Department of Agriculture, 2009a; United States Department of Agriculture, 2009b; United States Department of Agriculture, 2009d; United States Department of Agriculture, 2009f).

In recent years, federal legislation regarding the treatment of animals has given way to a trend of state legislation for animal protection. Many of these state laws have been proposed and supported by HSUS and other animal rights organizations. HSUS supported 121 successful pieces of state legislation in the year 2009 (The Humane Society of the United States, 2010). Recent pieces of legislation dealing with the treatment of animals included the Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act ("Horse Slaughter Ban"), passed in Texas and Illinois in 2007 (Becker, 2009).

A current trend in policy is legislation controlling livestock housing. Florida legislation banning gestation crates for sows passed in 2006, followed by similar laws in Arizona in 2006, Oregon in 2007, Colorado in 2008, California in 2008, and Maine and Michigan in 2009 (The Humane Society of the United States, 2009). California's "Proposition 2" was especially impactful, due to the size and scope of California's agricultural industry (Goodwin, 2010). In response to this trend of policy, Ohio took a step to be proactive in creating the OLCSB (The Ohio Ballot Board, 2009). The Board sets standards for the care of livestock, maintenance of farm safety, supports local food and protects Ohio farmers and families from out-of-state interest groups (The Ohio Ballot Board, 2009). The 13 members of the board, which are appointed by the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, must include the director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture, three family farmers, a food safety expert, two members from a statewide farming organization, two veterinarians, a dean of an Ohio college of agriculture, two consumers and one local humane society representative (The Ohio Ballot Board, 2009). "Issue 2", the legislation to establish the OLCSB, appeared on the November 2009 Ohio ballot. Issue 2 passed with 63.66% (n=1,959,669) of voters in favor and 36.4% (n=1,118,805) opposed (Ohio Secretary of State, 2009).

### **The Ballot Initiative Process and Campaign Spending**

Ballot initiatives are a permanent part of the legislative process in 24 states, including Ohio (Ballot Initiative Strategy Center, 2011). In Ohio, initiatives exist in two forms: initiated statutes and initiated constitutional amendments, such as the establishment of the (S)LCBSB (Ohio Secretary of State). To place a constitutional amendment on the ballot, a strict process must be followed. First, petitioners must create a committee of three to five individuals to represent them in all matters (Ohio Revised Code Section 3519.02). Second, an initial petition, signed by 1,000 qualified Ohio voters, must be filed with the Ohio Attorney General and Secretary of State (Ohio Revised Code Sections 3501.05; 3519.01; 3519.05; 3505.062). Once the Ballot Board has certified the petition, the petitioners may begin to collect signatures for the initiated constitutional amendment (Ohio Constitution: Article II, Section 1g). The number of valid signatures on the petition must equal at least 10% of the total number of votes cast for the office of governor at the last gubernatorial election, the signatures must have been obtained from at least 44 of the 88 counties in Ohio and each signer must be a quali-



fied Ohio voter. Once signatures have been filed and verified, the initiated constitutional amendment will proceed to the ballot Constitution, Article II Section 1a; Ohio Constitution, Article II, Section 1g).

Although HSUS and other outside groups would likely use the signature-gathering process to place an initiative on the ballot, the Ohio General Assembly instead initiated Issue 2. To begin this process, the people behind Issue 2 had to gain the support of members of the General Assembly to sponsor resolutions that would place the constitutional amendment to create the OLCBSB on the ballot. The resolutions were introduced on June 18, 2009, in both the house and senate. A three-fifths vote in the General Assembly is required for passage of a joint resolution. HJR 2 passed with 84 yeas and 13 nays on June 24, 2009, and SJR 6 passed with 31 yeas and 1 nay on July 6, 2009 (129th General Assembly of the State of Ohio, 2009).

Ballot initiatives are frequently costly affairs, with both supporting and opposing sides spending large amounts on their campaigns. In 2006, over \$325 million was spent by both sides of the 12 most expensive ballot initiatives in the United States, dealing with issues from renewable energy to cigarette taxes (Ballot Initiative Strategy Center, 2011). The amount of money spent during campaigns is also on the rise, as in 1992, \$117 million was spent in 21 states on campaigns supporting or opposing ballot measures, and in 1998 that figure jumped to \$400 million in 44 states (Stratmann, 2005). An increase in spending is predicted to result in a favorable election outcome, as an additional \$1 million spent in favor of a ballot initiative is predicted to increase its chances of passing by 1.4%; and an increase of \$1 million spent in opposition to a ballot initiative decreases its likelihood of passage by 1.90% (Figueiredo, 2010).

A recent study in California revealed a large disparity in spending on legislative propositions from 1982-2006, which must pass through both houses of the state Congress to make it onto the ballot, and initiatives, which are placed on the ballot through a signature gathering process (Figueiredo, 2010). An average of \$478,406 was spent in support of propositions and \$220,273 in opposition; in contrast to an average of \$3.6 million in support of initiatives and \$2.4 million in opposition (adjusted for inflation, in 1982-1984 dollars) (Figueiredo, 2010).

Much of this spending is on mass media advertising, proven to impact the passage of an issue. Research has demonstrated that 100 extra advocacy advertisements increase the probability of the passage of an initiative by 1.2%, and 100 extra opposition advertisements decrease the probability of the passage by 1.8% (Stratmann, 2005). Trends are also apparent in the types of advertising effective in political campaigns. Almost half of all adults used the internet, email or phone text messaging for political purposes during the 2008 campaign cycle (Smith & Lee, 2008). The two fastest-growing sources for political information are social media sites and online videos (Smith & Lee, 2008).

### **Cognitive Dissonance**

The cognitive dissonance theory states that when one is faced with conflicting ideas, one will be driven to complete cognitive work that will reduce the inconsistency (Dillard, 2002). Four research paradigms have repeatedly appeared in the research of dissonance processes: Free Choice Paradigm, Induced Compliance Paradigm, Belief Disconfirmation Paradigm and the Hypocrisy Paradigm (Dillard, 2002). These four paradigms drive the logic behind persuasion attempts. The Free Choice Paradigm assumes that once a decision is made, dissonance may arise (Dillard, 2002). Dissonance can be lessened by viewing the selected alternative as more desirable and the rejected alternative as less desirable, an effect called spreading of the alternatives (Dillard, 2002). The Induced Compli-

ance Paradigm assumes that dissonance arises when a person does or says something in contrast to a previously held belief or attitude (Dillard, 2002). The Belief Disconfirmation Paradigm assumes that dissonance arises when people are exposed to information which conflicts with their beliefs (Dillard, 2002). Finally, the Hypocrisy Paradigm states that when faced with dissonance, people will attempt to reduce it by acting in accord with their pro-attitudinal statement or changing their attitudes to be more consistent with their past behavior (Dillard, 2002). Research has supported the notion that dissonance is a motivational theory and produces lasting attitude, belief, and behavior changes (Dillard, 2002). Cognitive inconsistency arouses motivation to change behavior and thought processes, therefore the cognitive dissonance theory is key in persuasion and motivation efforts, such as the media campaign being examined in this study.

New research in the field supports the idea of vicarious dissonance, in which people experience dissonance and attitude change through the experiences of others (Cooper, 2010). This concept combines cognitive dissonance with the theory of social identity (Cooper & Hogg, 2007), suggesting that people experience dissonance vicariously when they view a member of their social group behave in a manner at odds with that group member's attitude. This ability to be motivated to alter one's one attitude by viewing attitude changes in another makes the theory of vicarious dissonance very useful in instigating attitude and behavior changes on a broad scale (Cooper, 2010). This theory is directly related to the planning of media campaigns surrounding ballot initiatives, as they are aimed to reach and persuade the broadest audience possible.

Recently, cognitive dissonance has been conceptualized in an action-based model (Harmon-Jones, Amodio, & Harmon-Jones, 2010 ). This model assumes that perceptions and cognitions activate action tendencies automatically, suggesting that when cognitions with action implications come into conflict, dissonance is aroused (Harmon-Jones, Amodio, & Harmon-Jones, 2010). Once an individual makes a decision to resolve that dissonance, they are motivated toward enacting the decision and behaviors which support it (Harmon-Jones, Amodio, & Harmon-Jones, 2010). This modern perception of cognitive dissonance suggests that once individuals are presented with information, such as the media materials in this study, and make a decision, they will take action to enact that decision, such as researching more about the ballot initiative and casting a certain vote. This action will also produce lasting changes in their attitude toward agriculture and public policy.

Because this study focuses on a media campaign aimed at persuasion, the cognitive dissonance theory is an important framework to consider. Voters were presented with information that may cause dissonance in their thought processes, and were hopefully then motivated to resolve that dissonance by forming a new, positive opinion on the farming industry and casting a "yes" vote on the issue at hand. Based on prior research, the cognitive dissonance persuasion theory will cause lasting changes in behavior and thought processes, therefore the new perspective gained by voters will alter their mindset toward farmers and animal-rights interest groups.

## **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to examine a successful marketing campaign focused on a ballot initiative, the "Yes on Issue 2" campaign in Ohio.

## **Research Design**

Researchers used case study methodology to evaluate the communications campaigns surrounding Issue 2. Case studies, commonly used in the social sciences, involve studying all of the intricacies



of a single case (Stake, 1995), such as the media campaign. Stake defines a case study as “the study of the peculiarity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (1995, pg. xi). In this research, the case is the media campaigns, and the important circumstances are the current state of public affairs in agriculture.

Interviews were a key part of the research conducted. The researchers interviewed three individuals involved with the media campaign, including a consultant at a consulting firm and two individuals in communications at Ohio Farm Bureau Federation who played large roles in selecting and overseeing the materials and tactics used. Within 6 months after the campaign these individual interviews were held using a scripted interview guide. Questions consisted of opinions on success and failures of the campaign. Through these interviews and secondary source research, researchers were able to study the timeline, budget, and reasoning behind the campaign. Additionally, researchers were able to gauge how Ohio Farm Bureau Federation rates the success of their campaign, and changes they may make in future campaigns.

Key areas examined were the impact of social media, as it is a “free” media to use, and grassroots/word of mouth communication. According to the Pew Institute, the two fastest growing sources for election information are social media sites and online videos (Smith & Lee, 2008). As these sources are free to create, it is interesting to determine how the advertisers would rate their effectiveness in terms of effort and money spent.

### **Data Collection**

Using a case study, the data collection process for this study was threefold: primary research through interviews, secondary research through news media analysis, and secondary research through campaign finance reports. The subjects for the interviews were chosen based on their first-hand involvement in the campaign and intimate knowledge of the methodology of the decision-making process for media purchases.

The newspapers used, The Cleveland Plain Dealer (267,888 readers) (The Cleveland Plain Dealer, 2007); The Columbus Dispatch (210,000 readers) (The Columbus Dispatch, 2008); The Toledo Blade (139,346 readers) (The Toledo Blade, 2010); The Cincinnati Enquirer (161,858 readers) (The Cincinnati Enquirer, 2011); and The Dayton Daily News (116,200 readers) (Dayton Daily News, 2008) represent the largest media markets in the state. A search of LexisNexis Academic database was conducted for each newspaper for the time frame of January 1–November 4, 2009. Search terms included “Issue 2 Ohio,” “Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board,” and “Livestock care”. Only news articles that focused primarily on Issue 2 were considered in this study. Endorsements of the initiative were considered separately. A total of 27 news articles were collected, along with nine opinion editorial/endorsement pieces.

The Ohio for Livestock Care PAC expenses for the year 2009 were analyzed. Only the income and expenses for 2009 were considered, as this was the year of the election. The expense report was accessed through the Ohio Secretary of State. The Top 10 contributors were compared, along with their total contributions. The expense breakdown of the PAC was also considered.

### **Findings**

#### **Objective 1. Campaign Spending**

The campaign spending report filed by Ohio for Livestock Care provided valuable information to the study. A total of \$5,448,226 was donated to the pro-Issue 2 campaign. The main source of

funding was the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, who donated \$606,930, or 11.15% of the total contributions. A considerable portion of the campaign funding came from outside of the state of Ohio, with the largest out of state contributors being the National Pork Producers Council (\$249,500) and United Egg Producers (\$200,000). In total, \$1,793,359, or 33.0% of total contributions, came from outside of Ohio. The vast majority of campaign funding came from the agricultural industry. Within agriculture, the top donors came from the following industry segments: Farm Bureau (\$1,314,853), poultry and eggs (\$1,048,262), livestock (\$910,559), agricultural services and products (\$698,860), and crop production and basic processing (\$431,910) (See Table 1).

Table 1.

*Top 10 Contributions to Ohio for Livestock Care Political Action Committee*

| <b>Contributor</b>               | <b>Amount</b>         | <b>Percent of Total</b> |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Ohio Farm Bureau Federation      | \$606,930             | 11.15%                  |
| National Pork Producers Council  | \$249,500             | 4.59%                   |
| United Egg Producers             | \$200,000             | 3.68%                   |
| Cooper Farms Feed & Animal Prod. | \$144,495             | 2.66%                   |
| Ohio Fresh Eggs LLC              | \$144,000             | 2.65%                   |
| Ohio Poultry Association         | \$125,273             | 2.30%                   |
| Ohio Soybean Association         | \$110,500             | 2.03%                   |
| Ohio Pork Producers Council      | \$107,922             | 1.98%                   |
| Weaver Bros, Inc.                | \$105,073             | 1.93%                   |
| Fort Recovery Equity Inc.        | \$100,576             | 1.85%                   |
| <b>Total Contributed to OLC</b>  | <b>\$5,448,226.08</b> |                         |

The top expenses for the campaign were in advertising. The most costly form of advertising utilized was television, costing \$1,633,158, or 36.90% of total spending. Other forms of advertising used were mailed advertisements, radio spots, billboards, automated calls, and yard signs. Besides advertising, considerable expenses were consulting, website, legal, and market research. In all, the PAC spent \$4,426,779 on the pro-Issue 2 campaign (See Table 2).

The key personnel interviewed were asked to provide insight on the central elements of the campaign and their effectiveness. Their responses can be summarized into three categories: social media, unity, and proactivity.

Social media was a key tool used in the pro-Issue 2 campaign, especially by the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation. Subject 1 stated: "People aren't going to OFBF.org, they aren't going to OhioansForLivestockCare.com, they're going to Facebook and Twitter to spend their time. That's where they're discovering news and information, that's where like-minded people are sharing news and information, that's where they trust people more than they trust messages." Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were all used in the campaign. Facebook was used as a rallying point for campaign supporters, where they could post photographs, links, and other content. Twitter was used to reach a broader audience and to broadcast events as they occurred, such as the hearings in the Senate and the House about the ballot initiative, which were live-tweeted using a hash tag. "Our logic for using social media was to show who we are, to build trust in Ohio farmers and our members, to build those connections

and those relationships so that when we do need them, they're already established," said Subject 1.

Table 2. 2009

*Expenses for OLC PAC*

| Expense                           | Amount                | Percent of Total |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Television Advertising            | \$1,633,158.57        | 36.90%           |
| Mailers (Printing/postage/design) | \$784,204.87          | 17.72%           |
| Advertising (General)             | \$682,953.59          | 15.43%           |
| Consulting                        | \$449,763.97          | 10.16%           |
| Automated Calls                   | \$250,875.25          | 5.67%            |
| Radio Advertising                 | \$161,930.23          | 3.66%            |
| Website                           | \$113,220.60          | 2.56%            |
| Legal                             | \$108,741.48          | 2.46%            |
| Billboard Advertising             | \$76,245.07           | 1.72%            |
| Market Research                   | \$62,594.24           | 1.41%            |
| Yard Signs                        | \$55,925.87           | 1.26%            |
| Misc.                             | \$47,166.07           | 1.07%            |
| <b>Total Spending</b>             | <b>\$4,426,779.81</b> |                  |

Additionally, unity was a recurring topic during the interviews. Unifying to establish the Ohioans for Livestock Care organization allowed Ohio agriculture to present a united front and to pool their resources for the campaign. Subject 2 referenced unity as an important element to the campaign's success, stating, "One of the crucial decisions both on the political action side and the communications' side was that this was going to be a collaborative effort. The Pork Producers weren't going to go out and fight this battle on their own, and the poultry people on their own, and the dairy people on their own, and Farm Bureau separately. It was decided that agricultural unity was a must."

Unity was also crucial in the different elements of the campaign, as harmony had to exist between the paid forms of media and grassroots efforts. Subject 3 noted room for improvement in this area, stating, "We did a lot of farmer engagement, I think we could have started that sooner and made more tools available to them. Potentially, we could have focused on more local events, really trying to bring people out in local communities."

Lastly, the interviewees emphasized the importance of being proactive. Proactivity allowed the OLCSB to be invented and implemented. After the February meeting with HSUS, Ohio's agricultural leaders chose to be proactive by pursuing the establishment of the OLCSB instead of mounting a defensive campaign against an HSUS-supported ballot initiative. Being on the offensive allowed the Issue 2 campaign to focus on the positive aspects of both the OLCSB and Ohio agriculture, as opposed to being in a reactionary mode to statements made by HSUS. Subject 3 stated, "As a general principle, animal care issues win, whether it's our side bringing it or the activist side bringing it... which is part of why we won, which is part of why HSUS wins."

Being proactive with establishing a social media presence was also a contributing factor to its success, as Subject 1 stated: "With Issue 2, we had already built up a really nice group of followers [on Twitter], we had a lot of fans on Facebook, there were a lot of people that we interacted with on a daily basis that enjoyed getting messages from Ohio Farm Bureau and talking with Ohio Farm

Bureau...it was a natural thing for us to do.”

### **Objective 3. Media Coverage**

Media coverage of Issue 2 appeared in each of the five newspapers included in the study. The Columbus Dispatch printed the most articles on the subject, with a total of 10. The Cincinnati Enquirer and Cleveland Plain Dealer published the least, with each printing only two articles dealing with Issue 2 appearing during the study period. These articles were all straight news pieces dealing with the issue and arguments surrounding it; opinion-editorial pieces and letters to the editor were considered separately. Each newspaper that printed an editorial or endorsement on the issue, The Cleveland Plain Dealer, The Columbus Dispatch, The Dayton Daily News and The Toledo Blade, endorsed a “No” vote, usually citing opposition to the board being included in the Ohio Constitution. A total of 27 news articles were collected, along with nine opinion editorial/endorsement pieces.

The Cleveland Plain Dealer, who referred to the initiative as “Farm fresh foolery” in a July 6 editorial, shifted in tone by the end of the campaign to state: “Ohioans who vote “no” on Issue 2 on Nov. 3 should be prepared to vote “no” again, should the Humane Society seek its own ballot measure in a future election,” in their October 18th endorsement of a “no” vote. The Columbus Dispatch also cited constitutional issues in their opposition, stating “Creating a well-balanced board to set standards for the care of livestock in Ohio is a good idea, but using the Ohio Constitution to do so is not. State Issue 2 would amend the constitution to create a 13-member Livestock Care Standards Board. Such a board could easily be created by legislation,” in their November 2 editorial.

## **Key Findings and Implications**

### **Limitations of the Study**

The case study conducted focused on the campaign promoting a “Yes” vote on the issue, as there were no registered PACs in opposition. Although an opposition campaign did exist, the lack of organization and filed spending reports made it difficult to analyze. Additionally, the social media aspect of the study poses issues. As statistics regarding the Facebook and Twitter posts of the Issue 2 campaign were not logged, it is impossible to track how many times they were viewed or shared, and therefore gauge their effectiveness. It is also difficult to quantify the value of social media in the campaign, as it is a “free medium” to use and therefore does not have a fixed cost.

### **Objective 1: Campaign Spending**

A total of \$5,448,226.08 was donated to the pro-Issue 2 campaign. In total, 33.0% of total contributions came from outside of Ohio. This is interesting to note, as it emphasizes the importance of unity within the agricultural industry. The Issue 2 campaign in Ohio was very much a ‘trial run’ for other states with agricultural industries that may face a similar campaign in the future.

Within agriculture, the top donators came from the following industry segments: Farm Bureau, poultry and eggs, livestock, agricultural services and products, and crop production and basic processing. This is important to note, as industries outside of livestock production supported the issue, although it did not impact them directly. Industries outside of livestock, such as crops, insurance, and other services, must recognize that their futures go hand-in-hand with that of the livestock industry.

The top expenses for the campaign were in advertising. The most costly form of advertising utilized was television. Other forms of advertising used were mailed advertisements, radio spots, billboards, automated calls, and yard signs. Besides advertising, considerable expenses were consulting,



website, legal and market research. In all, the PAC spent \$4,426,779.81 on the pro-Issue 2 campaign. This seems to be a high amount for a campaign with little organized opposition, but it was crucial to spread a positive, unified face of Ohio agriculture, as supported by the cognitive dissonance theory of persuasion. If people are motivated to change their thought processes, the impact will be lasting and carry over to other decisions.

### **Objective 2: Central Messages and Key Personnel**

According to campaign personnel, social media was a key tool used in the pro-Issue 2 campaign, especially by the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation. Facebook was used as a rallying point for campaign supporters, as one must “Like” the page to view the information, while Twitter was used to reach a broader, more general audience, as posts are open to public view. Social media was an important component due to its free nature and wide audience. Personnel indicated that in a future campaign, they would dedicate even more time and resources to their social media sites. This information implies that agricultural organizations should establish a presence online and familiarize themselves with social media websites and tools before facing such situations.

Unity was also a recurring topic during the interviews. Unifying to establish the PAC allowed Ohio agriculture to present a united front and to pool their resources for the campaign. Additionally, those interviewed emphasized the notion that the portion of the industry with the most to lose should not be at the forefront of the campaign. This implies that agricultural groups must join together to display a united front in the face of outside threats, instead of dividing and avoiding issues that do not directly impact them. Unity was also crucial in the different elements of the campaign, as harmony had to exist between the paid forms of media and grassroots efforts. It was suggested that in future campaigns, the personnel would work to strengthen this relationship by surveying grassroots campaign members about what materials they would find most effective, and then hiring paid media firms to create these materials.

Lastly, the interviewees emphasized the importance of being proactive. Proactivity allowed the OLCSB to be invented and implemented. Organizations should be proactive before faced with a crisis by becoming a trusted source of information and creating an open forum of discussion with the public. Having a well-established social media following made Ohio Farm Bureau’s campaign much easier and successful. Agricultural organizations should establish a presence online and in public as soon as possible in order to become a familiar source for information for the public.

### **Objective 3: Media Coverage**

The five major Ohio newspapers, The Cincinnati Enquirer, The Cleveland Plain Dealer, The Columbus Dispatch, The Dayton Daily News and the Toledo Blade, covered the debate over Issue 2 with 27 total news stories between May 26, 2009 and November 4, 2009. Additionally, nine opinion editorial/endorsement pieces were published during this same time frame, with the four papers that offered an opinion supporting a “No” vote on the issue.

While the number of negative endorsements and editorials implies an uphill battle with the media, many of these pieces focused on the constitutional aspect of the issue rather than the OLCSB itself. This coverage implies that the agricultural community must maintain an open and honest dialogue with the media and constantly be available to provide information. The fact that the media’s criticism of the issue focused largely on constitutional issues as opposed to showing support for HSUS’ demands is promising for agriculture.



## Implications

This campaign is an example of a piece of legislation that benefits agriculture successfully passing on the ballot, in contrast to the large numbers of initiatives that do not. It is apparent that agricultural organizations need to be proactive and communicate with the public at all times in order to be successful in the future with other ballot initiatives.

By being proactive after the original meeting with HSUS, Ohio agricultural organizations were able to move swiftly to set the initiated constitutional amendment in motion that would create the OLCSB. Instead of mounting a defensive campaign against an HSUS-supported ballot initiative, Ohio agriculture was able to be on the offensive. Additionally, Ohio Farm Bureau was proactive in their social media efforts. Because they were already an established presence on Facebook and Twitter, less effort was needed to reach a broader audience. Other state and national agricultural organizations should begin to establish a credible presence online, so they can be viewed as a trusted source of information in the future when they attempt to communicate about key issues.

The unified agricultural industry allowed the pro-Issue 2 campaign to receive considerable amounts of funding from both in and out of Ohio. Without this funding, the campaign would have been impossible to accomplish. Unity also allowed organizations to come together to establish the Ohio for Livestock Care PAC to present a united front. Grassroots advocacy was an important part of the campaign, as it is low-cost and allows a personal connection between the farmer and the public. Other campaigns, and communication professionals, should heed the advice regarding ensuring a strong and cohesive connection between the paid media materials and the grassroots campaign efforts.

Based on the outcomes of this study, agricultural communication educators need to ensure that they are educating their students on the wide range of communication methods available during media campaigns. Students must be aware of every communication outlet, from paid television advertising to grassroots volunteers, and how they can function cohesively in a media campaign. Additionally, it is important for educators to pass on information about the legislative process. The current and next generations of agriculturalists must know how the government functions in relation to agriculture and how to use the legislative process to their greatest advantage.

Further study of around specific message design used in the campaign and voters' perceptions of effectiveness would help lend more clarity to the case as well. Interviews with voters on the effectiveness of the campaign materials from their point of view would help researchers determine what other factors that swayed voters at the polls in this election.

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