

## **Grange PAC comments**

Good morning, and thank you all for your gracious hospitality in having me here this morning, and for all of the support you have given me over the years.

For as long as I have been in office, Grange has been among the few corporations in central Ohio to host election fairs and symposiums, and one of the few actively encouraging its employees to meet the candidates and learn more about the issues that affect all of our lives.

Clearly, the public is growing increasingly disaffected and cynical of politics. And often, when asked why they don't vote, many suggest that it is because they do not know the candidates – so all of you at Grange are to be congratulated for your participation in and commitment to this process, and for allowing political candidates to meet your employees – it is critically important for our shared goals of democracy and good government.

And you all should be equally proud of Grange's presence and advocacy in Washington – so much of what we do in Washington has a direct impact on you, and much of what I do by virtue of my seat on the House Financial Services Committee affects Grange, your bottom line, and your customers....but Grange has always been very adept at advocating the impact of legislation on your company and its employees.

While I've always believed that civic virtue and social consciousness should be sufficient incentive to drive voters to the polls, the news that the winner of America Idol last week received more votes – 50 million in all -- than any President in our nation's history, leaves me a bit befuddled, and underscores the importance of your efforts to help create an informed electorate through forums such as this.

As many of you might know, as the Republican Conference Chair, part of my job is to communicate our Republican message, agenda, and accomplishments to the American

people – to demonstrate to them that beyond the doom and gloom headlines of the newspapers, there is reason for optimism. So, as I recognize that not everyone in this room is a Republican, I will try not to overwhelm you with partisan rhetoric; but please bear in mind that at the end of the day, I am a Republican, and it sometimes becomes difficult to divest myself of my party membership.

- Without question, 2006 will be the most challenging race for Republicans all across Ohio, the nation, and for me personally.
- The AFL-CIO has pledged to pour \$40 million into the effort to unseat Republicans, and much of that money has already ended up here in central Ohio.
- I'm sure you've all seen the evidence of this money – from the particularly nasty MoveOn.org ads to the misleading, cowardly robocalls on your voicemail, telling you I'm on a 6 week vacation or worse.
- A significant amount of this money goes to groups called 527s – political organizations that arose after

the passage of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill – a bill whose proponents claimed will rid politics of money.

- During the first elections under McCain Feingold in 2004, ninety-seven 527 groups raised \$323.4 million; of that, \$142 million came from **twenty-five** individual donors. I believe this is antithetical to our belief in free and fair elections.
- Many of the 527s are funded through labor money; but unlike the voluntary contributions given to Grange's PAC, this money comes from the compulsory union dues of rank and file union members – many of whom vote Republican and support Republican candidates, only to see their own dues being used to defeat candidates they support.
- And that's why your participation is more important than ever before:
- Your contributions to the Grange PAC serve as the counterbalance to the unregulated flow of 527 money

pouring into Ohio right now – and help to level the playing field for the candidates Grange supports.

Just as it was in 2004, Ohio will again be the focus of the nation in 2006. I used to take a certain amount of pride in Ohio's status as 'the bell weather state' – and for the axiom, "as Ohio goes, so goes the nation"...made us feel pretty important on Capitol Hill. But for those of you out there who become a little weary when every national political pundit and talking head wants to take your electoral pulse on a daily basis, beware – Ohio is back in the national spotlight.

But we have many reasons for optimism:

- At the end of the day, this election will not be nationalized, nor will it be about lobbyists or coin scandals...it will be about the name on the ballot, leadership, and ideas, and I believe I have earned the trust of central Ohio voters on all of these. Clearly, this election is about the next four years, not the last four years.
- Most telling were the 5 recent Reform Ohio Now initiatives – the brainchild of the Democrats and the

527s, and fully funded by George Soros – one of the initiatives would have turned congressional redistricting over to political appointees to redraw the districts based on some nebulous formula, and one that would have transparently benefited Democrats.

- Short of another shot at President Bush, the RON initiatives should have driven Democrats to the polls in droves...not only were all 5 initiatives were resoundingly rejected by Ohio voters 3-1, but voter turnout was abysmal.
- The true strength of the Republican Party is the dedication and hard work of the volunteers at the grassroots level. The ability of our state party to get voters to the polls, to register new voters, and to spread the Republican message shocked everyone in 2004. That infrastructure is alive and well and Ohio, and will rear its head once again this November.
- It's been estimated that the Democrats, with the help of the 527s, outspent Republicans in Ohio by more than \$10 million. It's our ability to connect to voters at a grassroots level versus money and vitriol that has me very confident.

Nationally, we have reasons for optimism. In Iraq, the Iraqi people took another step toward full self-governance with the formation of the new Iraqi Cabinet two weeks ago. We

are inching slowly – albeit very slowly -- toward a immigration reform bill – hopefully, one that will protect our borders and ensure our nation’s national security. And we just completed a remarkable overhaul of our Medicare program – one that now provides prescription drug coverage to more than 37 million American seniors, allowing them to no longer be forced to choose between food and their much-needed medications.

However, I have yet to come across a greater reason for optimism than the one that New York Times columnist David Brooks wrote about this past summer. Brooks described a prosaic, bottom-up moral revival that our nation has quietly been undergoing for the past decade – one in which many of our nation’s social issues have taken a dramatic -- yet almost unreported -- turn for the better. Brooks cited a host of crime and social statistics as evidence of an American moral revival:

- since 1993 the rate of family violence has dropped by more than 50%
- violent crime is down 53%
- violence by teenagers down 71%

- teen pregnancy down 28% and teen suicide is dropping
- the number of abortions is in steady decline since the early 1990's and the rate of adoptions is soaring.

I find all this so encouraging. While some of this has to do with the policies coming out of Washington, more importantly, it is a result of a renewed moral compass many American families have embraced independent of Washington, Hollywood, or any other influence we all instinctually look for. And while it is human nature to look at the world around us and believe that it is going to hell in handbasket, this quiet, pedestrian revival is cause for all of us to proclaim that our country is clearly on the right track.

As many of you might know, a month ago the business publication “Site Selection” named Ohio the 2nd best business climate in the nation – we ranked 8th in the same survey in 2004. Yet Ohio also ranks 47th in the nation in job creation – behind Michigan and the hurricane ravaged states of Mississippi and Louisiana. So as a member of the Ohio delegation in Congress, my charge is to address this



disconnect, and help bridge the gap between Ohio's economic potential, and its relative sluggish performance. But the news is clearly improving for our state -- between March and April, Ohio was 3rd in the nation in employment growth, behind only Illinois and Georgia. Later today I travel to Honda, where as many of you know, they are deciding on a location for its next manufacturing plant -- and whether it locates to Ohio or to one of our neighbors, more Honda suppliers will soon set up shop within our state, creating thousands of high-paying Ohio jobs. And one of the biggest potential economic boons to our area -- Rickenbacker -- stands poised to explode with growth and job creation in southeastern Franklin County.

And there is more good news -- we are fortunate in that our Ohio delegation remains as strong as any in the nation, and works more cooperatively for the betterment of our state than any other. We have appropriation cardinals, subcommittee chairs, members of leadership, and most notably, John Boehner's election as Majority Leader -- this should reap big rewards for Ohio, and keep the issues of

concern to all of you at Grange on the front burners of our agenda in Washington.

Thank you again for your warm hospitality, and I'm happy to field any questions you might have.