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Ohio Pig Farmers Applaud Ohio House for Passing Feral Swine Bill

Ohio Pork Council introduced legislation to protect state's agriculture.

NEW ALBANY, OHIO – After many months of providing key facts and answering questions with legislative officials, the efforts of the Ohio Pork Council have passed a milestone with today's passage by the Ohio House of H.B. 503 by a vote of 89-0. Introduced earlier this year, the bill which now must pass the Senate would prohibit the importation and hunting of feral swine in the state and ends the practice of garbage feeding, both of which pose serious disease risks to the state's swine herd, including the possibility of introducing African swine fever.

"We're celebrating today's vote in the House, and we remain very optimistic that this bill will see bipartisan passage in the Senate soon to pave the way of giving our state's largest industry — agriculture — the added protection from the risk of foreign animal diseases that we're seeking, said Cheryl Day, executive vice president of the Ohio Pork Council.

Beyond the reduced risk of animal disease, Day points to the immense damage that non-native feral swine bring to Ohio's land, crops, soil, and water each year, which she says alone justifies the complete passage of H.B. 503 in the Senate. National estimates put costs at \$1.5 billion each year in cleaning up the damage caused by wild pigs.

Ohio Veterinary Medical Association Executive Director Christopher Henney said in written testimony recently that feral swine may carry at least 30 viral and bacterial diseases and nearly 40 parasites.

"By outlawing the hunting and importation of feral swine into the state, Ohio will continue to be a national leader in the agriculture and animal health industries," Henney wrote. "This bill is a significant step in the right direction for Ohio and OVMA is proud to support this effort."

Other groups in Ohio that support this legislation include the Cattleman's Association, the Soybean Association, the Sheep Improvement Association, the Poultry Association, and the Dairy Producers Association.

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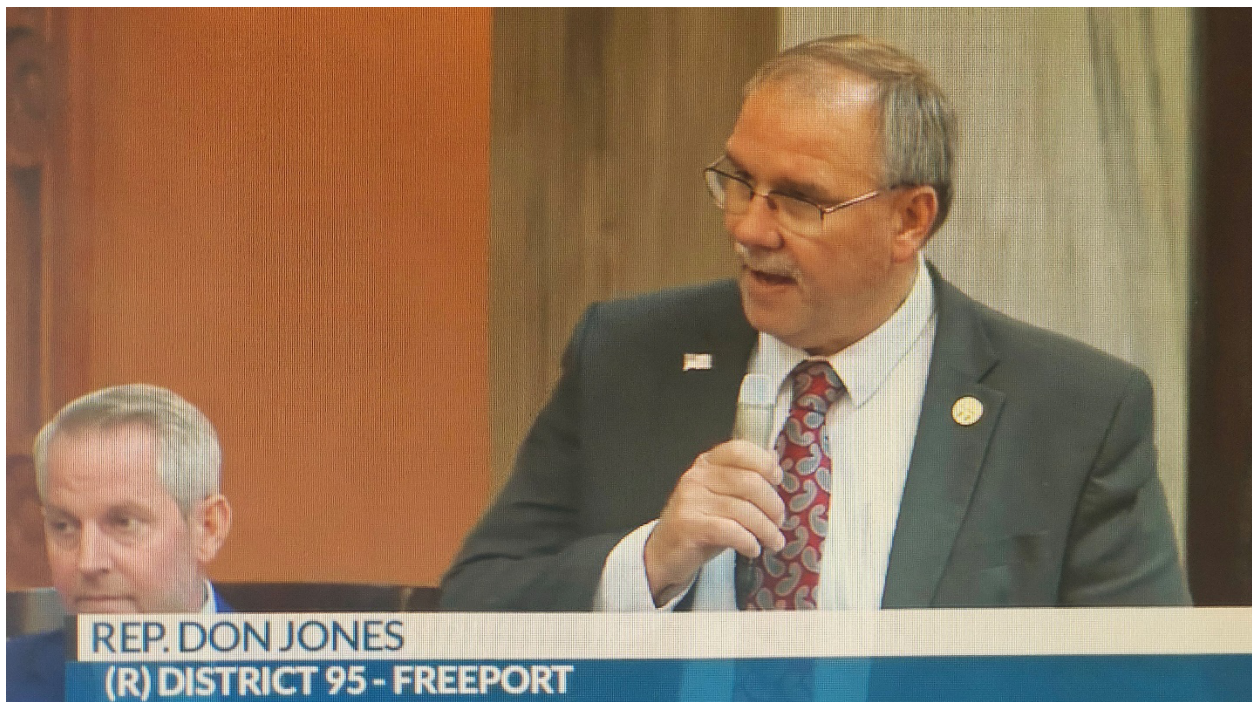
In his final remarks immediately prior to the final House vote, Rep. Don Jones (R-Freeport) thanked the Ohio Pork Council for its leadership on this important legislation. “It’s our hope that this bill will stop from happening here in Ohio what has occurred in other states with feral swine and to protect our animals and farmers ability to produce quality food.”

Echoing Jones’ sentiments of support was Rep. Juanita Brent (D-Cleveland) who said, “This bill will help us keep ‘bringing home the bacon’ because it is proactive, not reactive for the state of Ohio. We are trying to make sure that we are setting the right standards as an agricultural state.”

“We’re grateful to the leadership of the House Ag Committee, representatives Bob Peterson (R-Sabina), Don Jones, and all those who have supported us on this journey to get us to this point of bringing greater protection to our state’s livestock and crop producers,” Day said. “Now, we just need to get H.B. 503 over the final finish line to reach our overall objective of protecting Ohio farmers in a way that they deserve.”

About the Ohio Pork Council

The Ohio Pork Council was established in 1968, beginning with nearly 800 pig farmers dedicated to the task of promoting their own product. Currently, OPC has approximately 2,500 members. Their mission is to serve and benefit all Ohio pork producers. To learn more about the Ohio Pork Council, visit www.OhioPork.org or call 614-882-5887.



Rep. Don Jones (R-Freeport), a cosponsor of Ohio H.B. 503 stood before the House on June 12 just before it passed by an 89-0 bipartisan vote. The bill, supported by the Ohio Pork Council and the state’s ag commodity groups, would prohibit importation and hunting of feral swine as well as outlaw garbage feeding of pigs.