

February 1999

ARPR 99-04



Agricultural and Resource Policy Report

Colorado
State
University

Extension

Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, Fort Collins, CO 80523-1172
<http://dare.colostate.edu/pubs>

PUBLIC POLICY (ISSUES) EDUCATION RESOURCES

Andy Seidl¹

Extension personnel, if they are doing their job, inevitably find themselves in the middle of controversial public issues. Cooperative Extension's role as educator of the public and facilitator of civil public dialogue is essential to the democratic process. Methods, tools and resources exist to support extension personnel in their efforts to work with their clientele to find solutions to controversial public issues. In this handout, a number of public policy education issues and resources are highlighted as examples of the resources available to extension educators facing opportunities and challenges in this arena.

Definition: "Public policy is an identifiable course of action hammered out in the political arena to maximize the satisfaction of relevant interest groups and to improve the general welfare. It is developed through debate and compromise by diverse interests with divergent views about economic and social problems and the government's role in dealing with them! The purpose of public policy (issues) education is to increase the level of understanding among the people so that they have a more complete knowledge base from which to make decisions on public issues and to more fully participate in the public decisionmaking process." (Barry Flinchbaugh)

Cooperative Extension's role in public policy education is to:

- 1) raise the important questions that should be addressed;
- 2) provide the best possible information based on current science; and
- 3) facilitate discussions so that policy makers and citizens can make wise decisions.

Some examples of where can you go for ideas and resources:

CSU-CE Public Policy Education Web Site:
<http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/CoopExt/EDUCPGMS/PUBPOL/pubpmenu.html>

This web site will be the principal repository or link for public policy education materials generated at CSU.

Kettering Foundation Web Site:

<http://www.kettering.org/>

Kettering Foundation has developed an excellent and popular public issues education methodology called "Issues Framing." This methodology has been highly successful in creating an environment within which controversial issues can be better understood and solutions found in a community setting.

¹ State Public Policy Specialist, Agricultural and Resource Economics Department, Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, CO, 80523-1172. T: 970-491-7071. F: 970-491-2067. E-mail: aseidl@agsci.colostate.edu.

Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

Farm Foundation Home Page:

<http://www.kettering.org/>

Farm Foundation is among the principal locations to find up to date public policy issues and research projects.

North Carolina State's Public Issues Education Home Page:

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/PIE/>

Leon Danielson's public issues education home page is probably the best place to find the names and addresses of public policy specialists throughout the country as well as links to public policy and issues education materials.