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Ohio Legislators “Battle for the Bacon” at State Fair

Third annual event builds connections with Ohio’s pig farmers

COLUMBUS, Ohio – For the third year, a bipartisan group of some of Ohio’s boldest and fun-loving state legislators came together to show off their pig-handling talents at the Ohio State Fair’s Battle for the Bacon, a collaborative event produced by the Ohio Pork Council and the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

Serving as the event’s judges were Rep. Bob Peterson and Rep. Roy Klopfenstein. In addition, Ohio Pork Council Executive Vice President Cheryl Day, along with Ohio Department of Agriculture Brian Baldrige, kept the capacity crowd informed of the show ring events while recognizing those who volunteer to make it all possible, especially the youth mentors and their families who helped prep the legislator participants.

This year’s participants (legislators and youth exhibitors) included:

Senator Kyle Koehler & Wade Smith, Senator Michele Reynolds & Megan Smith-McCarley, Senator Willis Blackshear & Allison Brink, Senator Kristina Roegner & Gilbert White, Representative Christine Cockley & Alli Knecht, Representative Dave Thomas & Taylor Ellsworth, Representative Haraz Ghanbari & Clair Lampe, Representative Kellie Deeter & Kinsley Swanson, Representative Melanie Miller & Addilyn Bryant, Representative Michele Grim & Tucker Schuffenecker, Representative Kevin Miller & Colton Beckstedt, Representative Erika White & Ava Genter, Representative Johnathan Newman & Genevieve Davis.

“This continues to be a highlight for us to be able to show our state legislators just what it takes to not only show a pig but to care for it round the clock every day,” Day said. “That’s why we’re so pleased to have so many great youth mentors and their families from our OH-PIGS show pig circuit who step up to assist these lawmakers each year in preparing for the show ring and explaining how they raise these animals on the farm.”

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After each legislator and mentor was introduced to loud cheers, the lawmakers took their pigs to the ring as the crowd watched as each participant used their unique showmanship style to keep their animal showing at its best.

In the end, the judges awarded Rep. Haraz Ghanbari of Perrysburg the 2025 Grand Champion honors, with Reserve Champion honors going to Rep. Johnathan Newman of Troy. However, each lawmaker went away with a specialized banner, recognizing their efforts and ensuring future fond memories.

“This event is a unique way to engage with our state’s key political leaders in a fun and lighthearted way that connects them with our industry,” Day said. “It’s always about bringing people together to understand that we’re all striving to do what’s best for our state and beyond—doing what’s right for our people, our pigs, and our environment to ensure a better future for everyone.”



Ohio lawmakers pose with their show ring honors after learning what it takes to show a pig at the Ohio State Fair during the Battle for the Bacon event sponsored by the Ohio Pork Council and Ohio Department of Agriculture. (Ohio Pork Council)

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Taking grand champion honors was Rep. Haraz Ghanbari shown here with his Ohio pork youth mentor, Claire Lampe. Joining them were Rep. Bob Peterson (left), National Pork Producers Council President Duane Stateler, and Rep. Roy Klopfenstein. (Ohio Pork Council)

More photos are found here: <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/2z2jO7EdLc>

Video is found here: <https://vimeo.com/1106173508?share=copy#t=3.356>

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.