

**News From:**  
**Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie**



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**OHIO POLITICIANS SELL LAKE ERIE TO FARM BUREAU FOR \$1.2 MILLION**

**TOLEDO** – An environmental group today charged that political campaign investments by the Ohio Farm Bureau (OFB) have allowed corporate agriculture interests to control Ohio’s environmental policy to the detriment of Lake Erie.

An analysis by [Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie](#) (ACLE) shows the OFB Federation in four state legislative elections since 2009, invested \$1,173,116 in political campaigns, including\*

- \$690,581 to 32 of 33 current State Senators and 76 of 99 current State Representatives, concentrated among key committee members
- \$49,100 to Governor candidates (\$35,705 to John Kasich and \$13,395 to Ted Strickland)
- \$35,050 to Ohio Supreme Court candidates
- \$241,874 to Ohio Republican Party Funds and PACs
- \$116,692 to Ohio Democratic Party Funds and PACs
- \$39,819 to miscellaneous PACs

“Drinking water for millions of people and precious wildlife habitat is poisoned by toxic algal blooms caused primarily by some [700 million gallons](#) of animal feces and urine – equal to the sewage from Chicago and Los Angeles – dumped, untreated on fields draining into western Lake Erie every year from factory farms called Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs),” said Mike Ferner, ACLE coordinator, “And it’s no accident.”

ACLE, organized early this year in response to Toledo’s 2014 [water crisis](#) that shut off drinking water to over 400,000 people for three days due to microcystin contamination, pointed to state government decisions it said allowed corporate agriculture sway over Ohio’s environmental policy. In 2000, CAFO permitting authority was switched from the Ohio EPA to the Ohio Department of Agriculture and last year, a long-time Farm Bureau lobbyist was appointed director of Lake Erie policy for the Ohio EPA.

“It staggers the imagination but it’s true,” Ferner added, “that [Karl Gebhardt](#), a 19-year lobbyist with the OFB was appointed Chief of Soil and Water Resources for the Ohio DNR in 2012 and then OEPA Deputy Director in charge of Lake Erie programs the very year after Toledo’s water crisis.”

Last month, ACLE sent a questionnaire to all candidates for the Ohio House and Senate, to see if they support reducing corporate agriculture’s influence over Ohio farm policy and if they support having the U.S. EPA designate western Lake Erie as “impaired” as was done to begin the cleanup of [Chesapeake Bay](#).

*\* (sources: Ohio Secretary of State, Open Secrets, Federal Elections Commission)*