

4-H and the Creation of Extension Service Districts

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When a county embarks upon plans to create an Extension Service District it is important to have a clear understanding of what 4-H entities can and cannot do related to influencing the passage of an Extension tax. Here are some important points to remember.

1. The name of the service district may include language referring specifically to 4-H. In these cases the name and emblem are used by reference, just as a newspaper may use the name and emblem in a news story without specific permission to use the name and emblem.
2. Representatives of 4-H organizations such as the County 4-H Leaders' Association may write letters or speak on behalf of the creation of an Extension Service District as a private citizen. They may make reference to their affiliation with 4-H in those communications, but should not speak as an official representative of the organization.
3. 501(c)3 organizations may lobby, but only on a limited basis. 501(c)3 organizations which exceed a preset maximum for lobbying activity may jeopardize their non-profit status. Experience suggests that allowing these organizations to lobby on behalf of tax measures, even to support Cooperative Extension, is probably not a good idea. The best way for members of a County 4-H Leaders Association to influence passage of an Extension Service District is to join or make contributions to the local political action committee that is supporting the measure.
4. Political action committees are not compliant with the Federal policies under which the 4-H organization is granted its non-profit status. They should not be chartered or authorized to use the name and emblem. Chartering or authorizing them implies that their purpose is educational and they then become subject to Federal laws and policies governing 4-H. They may use the 4-H name and emblem by reference as described above.
5. Guidelines for the use of the 4-H Name and Emblem state that funds raised in the name of 4-H must be expended for educational programs for youth. Therefore, a County 4-H Leaders' Association should not make contributions to a local political action committee, purchase bumper stickers encouraging people to vote for passage of the district, or distribute direct mail appeals encouraging citizens to vote for the tax.