

The Lorain County Fair-Minded Coalition

For several years the Lorain County Fair-Minded Coalition has requested the Lorain County Fair Board to ban the display of the Confederate flag and Confederate memorabilia. Again, this year the Fair Board has denied that request.

The Lorain County Fair-Minded Coalition is led by Jeanine Donaldson, Director of the Elyria and Lorain YWCAs, and includes local representatives of the NAACP, Lorain County Rising, the Wellington Justice Collective, and Blank Slate Elyria as well as clergy members and many who are active in their communities. Several local political leaders have shown their support of the effort, including Candidate for State Representative Zach Stepp, Lorain County Commissioners Matt Lundy and Sharon Sweda, State Representatives Juanita Brent and Joe Miller, and Elyria Mayor Frank Whitfield.

The Coalition also urged the successful passage of anti-racism resolutions by the Elyria, Lorain and Oberlin City Councils that include the definition of racism as a public health crisis.

The group had discussions with Meijer, the grocery chain that has just opened a store in Lorain, about withdrawing its sponsorship of the Fair. The Meijer district manager agreed that due to the flag display, it was not in line with their company values and Meijer has withdrawn its support.

If you want to learn more about the organization and its purposes, please see the video of the recent press conference in Elyria on the Chronicle Telegram Facebook site
<https://www.facebook.com/ChronicleTelegram/videos/587843968594819/>

The group has requested that individuals write to Fair Board members to voice their objection to the sale of the flag.

The Christian Outreach and Service Committee urges members of the First Church congregation to join this effort.

Some suggestions for what to include in your letters

The Confederate flag is a symbol of structural racism: denial of black civil rights, wide disparities between blacks and whites in terms of such aspects as income, education, health care, housing, access to financial instruments, and a general sense of belonging. A ban on the sale of the flag is a potent gesture of moving onward toward a future that does not just repeat our past.

The flag is a banner of white supremacist groups, seen frequently in news outlets, in the company of the Nazi swastika.

The Civil War saw almost 320,000 Ohioans, both black and white, join the Union forces and fight in every battle of that conflict. The flag questions the value of the sacrifice of more than

thirty-five thousand Ohio soldiers who paid with their lives on the battlefield or as a result of illness.

The State of Mississippi, the last state to feature the image on its state flag, has recently voted to replace it. "This is not a political moment to me but a solemn occasion to lead our Mississippi family to come together and move on," Governor Tate Reeves said. "A flag is a symbol of our past, our present and our future. For those reasons, we need a new symbol."

Five years ago the Ohio State Fair banned the sale of the Confederate flag saying, "The Ohio State Fair has long held a policy that prohibits the sale of merchandise that contains offensive wording, lettering or graphics, as such, beginning with the 2015 Ohio State Fair, the sale or display of Confederate flags and/or Confederate flag merchandise shall be prohibited."

The appearance of the Confederate flag at the Lorain County Fair shocks members of our community. It speaks loudly about our culture and values. It has a disparaging, discouraging, and dismissive effect. Lorain County needs to pull together to work toward a brighter future. Banning the flag at the Fair is a gesture to unite all Lorain residents in that effort.

Whom Should we Contact?

info@Loraincountyfair.org

If you know Wellington residents please ask them to be in touch with Wellington Mayor Hans Schneider at 440-935-4733 hschneider@villageofwellington.com

A PDF file of the names and addresses of all the Lorain County Agricultural Society (Lorain County Fair Board) members is appended to this announcement. Please note that member Jed Lamb's address on the PDF is incorrect. His address is 44381 New London Eastern Rd., Sullivan, OH 44880.