

Governor John Kasich
Lieutenant Governor Mary Taylor
Director James Zehringer

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ohio Department of Agriculture Director Appoints Top Administrators

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (Jan. 13, 2011) – Ohio Department of Agriculture Director James Zehringer today announced several new appointments to the department's senior management team: Frederick M. Shimp, assistant director; Rocky Black, deputy director; Andy Ware, communications director; Thomas A. Johnston, chief financial officer; and Erica M. Pitchford, public information officer.

Shimp will oversee the department's day-to-day regulatory operations and laboratories, in addition to the department's policies and procedures. Prior to his new appointment, Shimp served as district director for Congressman Jim Jordan. He was also a former deputy director and legislative liaison for the Department of Agriculture under the Voinovich and Taft administrations. He earned his bachelor's degree in political science at The Ohio State University.

Black's responsibilities include overseeing the department's legislative efforts, and shaping department policy. He will have a special focus on promoting agribusiness opportunities. Black brings 23 years of public and private sector government affairs experience to the department. He is a former senior advisor on governmental issues for the Ohio Soybean Association, senior director for government affairs for the Ohio Farm Bureau and was a co-owner of Public Policy Solutions, LLC. He also served as director of legislative affairs under Governor Voinovich. Black graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in political science from The Ohio State University.

Ware will serve as chief spokesperson for the department and will be responsible for the organizational communication plan for the agency. Prior to this appointment, he served as assistant chief of the Ohio Division of Forestry. Ware is a former freelance writer for Ohio Farmer, Farm & Dairy, FarmWorld and Buckeye News, and also served as the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' media relations manager. He served as public information specialist for the Ohio Department of Agriculture during the Voinovich administration. Ware is a graduate of The Ohio State University with an associate of applied science degree in crop and beef production and a bachelor's degree in agricultural communications.

Johnston will be responsible for overseeing the department's financial operations and managing the department's fleet and laboratory maintenance. In addition, he will oversee agency procurement. He brings 35 years of financial and leadership experience to the department. He is a former chief financial officer for the Ohio Department of Development and the Ohio Department of Agriculture, and has served as manager of the housing tax credit program at the Ohio Housing Finance Committee. Johnston graduated from Chapman University with a bachelor's degree in economics and business administration.

Pitchford will serve as a spokesperson for the department. She previously spent four years as an aide in the Ohio Senate. She is a cum laude graduate of Ashland University where she earned bachelor's degrees in political science and religion.

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