

My name is Dan Troth. I've been working with Ohio's hand hewn barns for over 30 years and currently serve on the board of directors of the non-profit, 501c3, Friends of Ohio Barns. Our mission for these past 16 years has been to promote a greater awareness of our historic barns and to promote their conservation, stewardship and, when necessary, their adaptive re-purposing. We sponsor workshops on barn repairs and since 2000 have held an annual Ohio Barn Conference in various counties and led bus tours that have taken us inside over 100 of the finest barns Ohio has to offer. Our 19th conference will be held the last weekend of April in Carroll County.

The pioneers who settled Ohio's wilderness represented a great cross section of immigrants from England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, and the rest of Europe, all coming to America and then migrating to the fertile land of Ohio in the hopes of discovering a better life. That ethnic diversity led to the greatest variety of barn styles in the world. Here they discovered virgin forests whose trees they felled to build their barns. Today we still can find 60 and 70 foot long beams in our pre-Civil War barns. The barn was, without question, the most important structure on the farm. Everything of value: their livestock, their tools, horse drawn planting and harvesting implements and all of their crops were gathered in their barn and protected from the weather. Barns were precious, a fact that was well known at a time when nearly 75% of us were involved in farming. Today there exists no greater symbol of that agrarian past than the historic barns that dot our landscape. Unfortunately, these icons are an increasingly endangered species. As the demand for antique barn beams, reclaimed timbers and antique flooring has skyrocketed, the number of barns has plummeted. The barns are being torn down for their beautiful timbers and are shipped out of state at the rate of over a dozen a week: to California, Texas, Montana, Colorado, the Carolinas and every other state where they DON'T have barns. They're after the elephant tusks. We're trying to save the elephants! If we are unsuccessful in our efforts we will all be the lesser for it.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead once said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." I believe these young women and their teachers are one such group. They have worked over the last three years to bring us to this point, here in this room today and soon before the entire Senate, where you will have a unique opportunity to make a difference: the chance to call attention to the beauty and significance of Ohio's remaining historical barns. Ohio has done a great job in recognizing the contribution of scientists, inventors, presidents and astronauts to our national fabric. It's high time the collective contribution of Ohio's farmers, in helping to build this nation, be recognized and celebrated. We led the nation in agricultural production in many areas in the 1800's and continue to play a major roll to this day. Our success is inextricably linked to our agrarian past.

We owe it to those who came before us, to the communities that came together in support of one another and raised these barns. And most importantly we owe it to future generations. Our history matters. Barns represent the courage, the back-breaking work and the resilience of those on whose shoulders we stand today. In passing this bill you will bring a heightened awareness to their significance and their plight and that will go a lot further in their preservation than you may now realize. It is a way to honor and pay tribute to them. We owe it to future generations for these barns tell Ohio's story, and it is our story. Who we are is what we leave behind.