



GRASSROOTS LOBBYING

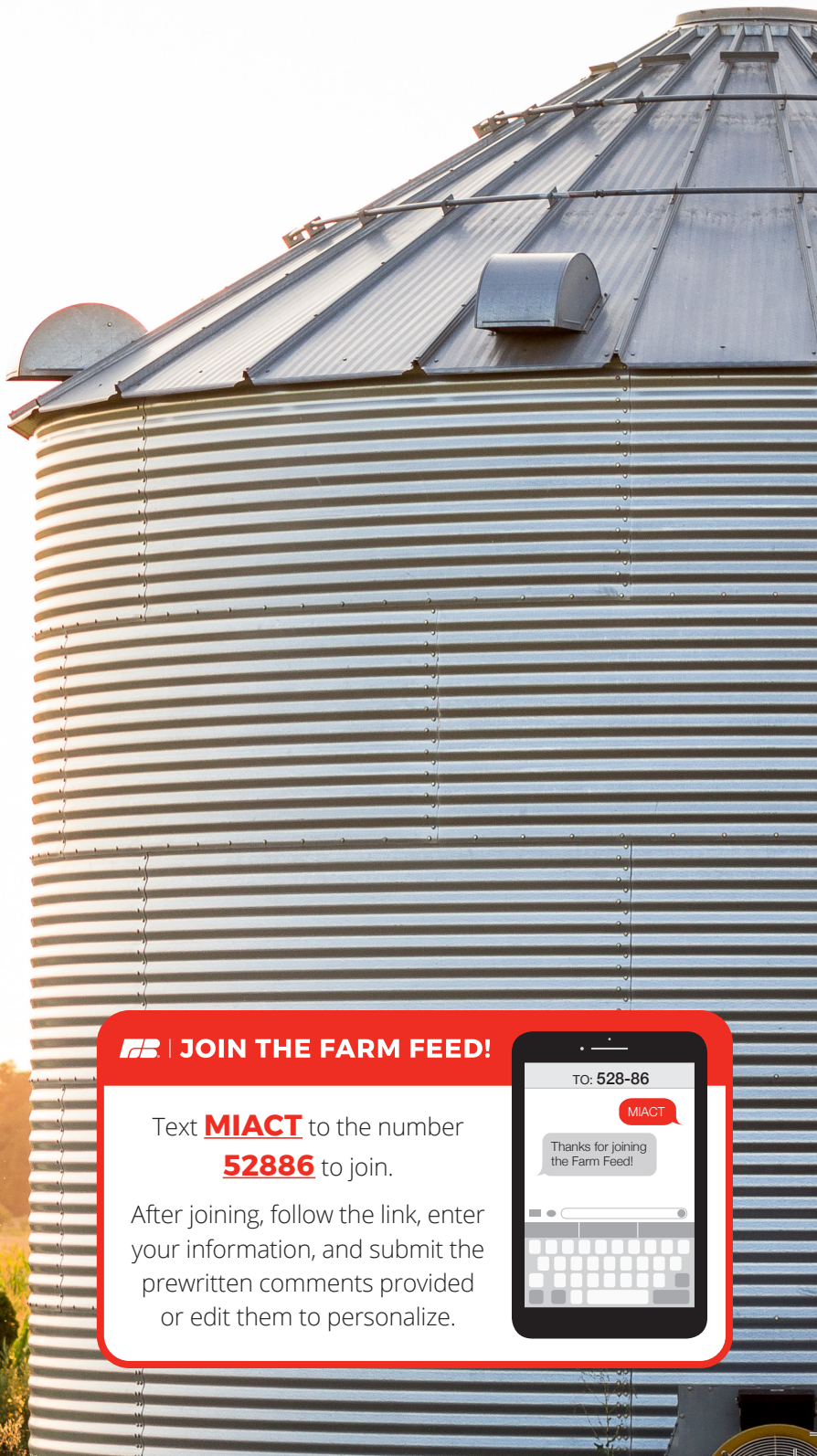
Building relationships with elected officials.

A guide for county Farm Bureaus

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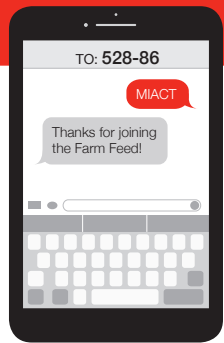




 | **JOIN THE FARM FEED!**

Text **MIACT** to the number
52886 to join.

After joining, follow the link, enter your information, and submit the prewritten comments provided or edit them to personalize.



GRASSROOTS LOBBYING

A guide for county Farm Bureaus

Being an Agriculture Champion

Implementing Farm Bureau policy depends on champion advocates like you. We need you to support policies that help farmers around the country, in your state and in your community. Whether you are an established leader or just getting started in Farm Bureau advocacy, you can raise your voice to influence policies impacting agriculture.

County Farm Bureau: Your Advocacy Hub

Effective grassroots lobbying starts with the county Farm Bureau. This guide is intended to help you maximize member interests and better engage in local, state and national legislative and regulatory activities.

To help implement Farm Bureau policy, counties are encouraged to appoint and utilize a public policy committee.

Public Policy Committees

County public policy committees consist of individuals focused on developing relationships with elected officials. Members are chosen for their qualifications and respect in their community. The public policy committee should represent the different areas of the county and its demographics, as well as the major commodities produced.



Objective

Develop relationships with elected officials and deliver results for member policy implementation.

Public policy committees are not intended to be issue experts; their task is to establish and enhance the county Farm Bureau's relationship with local, state and national elected officials.

Qualifications

The ideal member should have an interest in policy and politics, a focus on building a relationship, and an interest in planning events with a legislative and regulatory focus. The following characteristics should be considered in making selections.

Support of Farm Bureau policy

Public policy committee members must be willing to actively support Farm Bureau policy and put policy ahead of personal feelings or friendships with legislators. Any success in implementing Farm Bureau policy will only come as a result of unity.

Recruitment

Public policy committee members should be recruited and selected to serve on an annual basis. The county president and board of directors should complete the selections annually.



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Success Stories

Michigan Farm Bureau is blessed with a diverse county Farm Bureau membership, caused by geographical variations across the state and the vast array of food and fiber products members raise and produce. This results in each county Farm Bureau possessing unique qualities and individuals serving on public policy committees. Because some of the most successful ideas and events stem from learning from one another, following are examples of several county Farm Bureau's past activities you might consider trying.

- Each year, the Van Buren County Farm Bureau holds a summer legislative dinner on a local farm in the county. They invite all of their regular members to attend, along with their local, state and national elected officials. The annual event is moved around the county and held at a different farm each year. The event provides members with the opportunity to hear from elected officials on local, state and national agriculture issues, along with giving the membership a place to share their concerns with those elected officials.
- Wayne County Farm Bureau connected with their legislators by coordinating a farm tour. Legislators and members traveled by bus to three different farms across the county in an effort to build relationships and increase legislators' understanding of agriculture within their districts. With many of their legislators representing urban districts, exposure to the rural and agricultural areas was a unique opportunity. Great conversations were also had during the bus ride and gave members and legislators an opportunity to visit one another and build relationships. Legislative staff were also invited, and several attended in addition or in place of their legislator.
- Thumb area county Farm Bureaus host dinner on the farm events with their congressional representative.
- County Farm Bureaus have hosted township and county officials at meetings to develop relationships with local government leaders.
- Numerous county Farm Bureaus have expressed concerns over proposed township ordinances and by submitting public comments and working with township officials those ordinances have been blocked.



Core Programs

Lansing Legislative Seminar

The annual Michigan Farm Bureau Lansing Legislative Seminar (LLS) is a member's opportunity for face-to-face discussion with state legislative and regulatory leaders. Farm Bureau staff provide information and examples to help members give elected officials an accurate picture of how Farm Bureau policy reflects the issues that face agriculture. Staff also take the time to answer questions members may have on pending legislation or regulations.

LLS is held in February. For dates and more information, visit www.michfb.com/LLS.

Washington Legislative Seminar

Michigan Farm Bureau's Washington Legislative Seminar (WLS) updates farmers on national issues and provides the opportunity for members to explore the nation's capital. The seminar allows members to make personal contact with members of Congress and other government leaders to advocate for legislation and regulation impacting Michigan agriculture.

WLS is typically held in March. For dates and more information, visit www.michfb.com/WLS.



GRASSROOTS LOBBYING

A guide for county Farm Bureaus

Top Ten: Program of Work

Wondering what to include in your annual program of work? Here are our top ten recommendations:

1. A list of interested volunteers.
2. Your public policy committee's goals and activities.
3. The local, state and national issues the county Farm Bureau plans to address.
4. The local, state and national elected officials the county Farm Bureau plans to meet with.
5. A list of recommendations to the county board of members interested in attending Lansing Legislative Seminar and Washington Legislative Seminar.
6. Ensure county board members and members engaged in advocacy efforts are signed up to receive text action alerts through the Farm Feed program.
7. Develop a list of potential topics and issues for the policy development committee to consider when crafting resolutions.
8. A plan for sharing your work with the county Farm Bureau board and county members.
9. Complete the Champions of Excellence Advocacy award application by highlighting a legislative event or issue your county has worked on. Additionally, the Grassroots Lobbying award aims to annually recognize a county Farm Bureau for outstanding efforts in lobbying elected officials. The winner receives recognition at Lansing Legislative Seminar, a traveling plaque, a permanent plaque and a \$500 donation for use towards grassroots activities.
10. Communicate regularly with your county Farm Bureau board, county administrative manager and regional manager about your committee's work and ask for assistance when needed.



BEING AN INFLUENTIAL AND IMPACTFUL ADVOCATE

Write to Your Legislator

As a constituent, you carry a lot of power with your elected officials — remember, they work on your behalf.

If Michigan Farm Bureau shares an action request, pre-written letters will be provided that you can personalize with your thoughts. Many legislative staff say that a personalized letter carries more weight than a pre-written letter since it illustrates the constituent took the time to tell their story.

Here are some tips on writing to legislators:

- Begin by introducing yourself as a constituent and a member of Farm Bureau. Many legislators won't accept letters or emails from outside their district.
- Make it personal. In the first paragraph, specify what action you want taken and, if possible, refer to bills by name or number. Legislators can't know what you want them to do unless you tell them.
- Briefly share your story about how your legislator's actions will directly impact you, your community, your job and your family.
- Ask your legislator to support your point of view.
- Keep the length of your email to three or four paragraphs and 100 words or less.



BEING AN INFLUENTIAL AND IMPACTFUL ADVOCATE

Interact on Social Media

Seek them out | Follow your local, state or federal elected officials on social media networks.

Interact | If your elected official discusses an issue important to Farm Bureau, weigh in as appropriate.

Tell your story | Explain how the issue/legislation affects you as an individual and your farm. Personal examples are memorable.

Share Farm Bureau policy | Communicate Farm Bureau's grassroots, member-adopted policy position. State and national policy books are available online at bit.ly/MIFBpolicy.

Refer to accurate resources | Visit www.michfb.com for additional information to share with elected officials or contact one of Michigan Farm Bureau's many expert staff.

Recruit others | Encourage other Farm Bureau members to chime in on social media—often times more constituent comments equate to greater online influence.

Highlight events | Recognize legislators when they attend legislative events your county Farm Bureau hosts. Post photos or news stories from the event, and don't forget to tag lawmakers.

Give thanks | When elected officials take action that aligns with Farm Bureau policy, like and share their social media posts about these efforts. Customize your own posts publicly recognizing and tagging the legislators.



Make Timely and Effective Phone Calls

The window of opportunity to influence legislation when Congress or a state legislature is in-session can be very small. A personal phone call to your legislator's office is always an effective and timely advocacy tool.

When calling your legislator's office:

- Provide your name and address so you are recognized as a constituent. Also identify yourself as a Farm Bureau member.
- Identify the bill or issue you are calling about by its name and/or number if you have it.
- Briefly state your position and how you would like your legislator to vote.
- It is important to keep your phone calls quick and simple since most staff multitask during calls to keep up with the volume of communication from constituents.

Here's an example of a good introduction/90-second speech:

"Hi, I'm John Smith. I am a constituent who lives at 12345 Main Street, Springfield and a Farm Bureau member. I am calling to ask you to vote yes on H.R. 1234 and support farm programs. My phone number is 555-555-5555 if you have any questions. Thank you for your time today."

If you have more time or need to relay a detailed position, follow these steps:

1. Ask to speak to the staff member who handles the issue; they will share your comments and concerns with the legislator.
2. Ask for your legislator's stance on the bill or issue and for a commitment to vote for your position. Remember to make "the ask."
3. Don't guess at answers to questions. If the elected official's staff requests information you don't have, tell them you will gladly follow-up with requested information.
4. Follow-up with a note restating your position and thanking the legislator or staff member for his or her time.

BEING AN INFLUENTIAL AND IMPACTFUL ADVOCATE

Visit Your Legislators

Visiting your legislators is by far the most effective means of conveying your message. A face-to-face visit connects the issues you care about to the people your legislators were elected to serve.

Visiting your legislators may sound intimidating, but remember: their offices are open to the public, they are elected to work for you and they need to hear your story and opinions in order to vote on issues that will benefit the communities they serve.

Your visit helps legislators do their job well. Visits can be conducted in your home state or congressional district, as well as in Lansing or Washington, D.C.

Building a positive face-to-face relationship requires planning. If you would like to visit your legislator, you may want to consider contacting the Michigan Farm Bureau government relations staff to ensure that your efforts and messages are coordinated.

Please note that legislators often can't control their calendars and frequently ask their staff to handle meetings with constituents. A meeting with the appropriate staff member is often just as effective as a meeting with the legislator.

Follow-up with a thank-you letter or email and include any information that was requested by the legislator or staff. This will strengthen your relationship and leave a positive impression with the legislator's office.



Legislative Event Checklist

- Decide what type of event you want to host. This determines how far in advance you need to plan.
- Host your event on a Monday or Friday to best coincide with the legislative schedule. Legislative sessions in Lansing and Washington D.C. are typically held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Always check the legislator's schedule prior to choosing an event date.
- Call the legislator's office first, then send a personal invitation to the legislator(s) via email or mail. Send it four weeks or more in advance, with reminder phone calls or emails one to two weeks before the event.
- Craft an agenda and allow time for interaction among farmers and legislators.
- If you plan to have a list of formal questions, consider sending them to the legislator(s) in advance. If the event is more informal, conversational structure works best.
- Designate someone to do the welcome and describe the purpose of your event. Depending on your format, this person would also serve as the moderator to begin discussion and keep things moving.
- Be prepared to talk about pertinent issues and answer difficult questions.
- Decide if you want media coverage present. If so, plan accordingly and reach out to members of the media (radio, TV, newspaper, magazine, website, etc.). It is suggested to inform the legislator(s) if media are invited to the event.
- Try to keep your event to no more than two to three hours.
- Send a thank you card, email or letter to the legislator(s) for attending.
- Use resources like: Farm Feed promo cards, Michigan Government Directories, priority and emerging issue pages, legislative accomplishments list, etc.
- Engage your Michigan Farm Bureau Regional Manager in the planning process.

MEDIA ADVOCACY

Food and agriculture issues are a hot topic these days. You know the old adage, if you don't tell your story, someone else will do it for you. And so often, those eager to tell agriculture's story have biases against the way farmers do their jobs. Studies show that the public has a high level of trust for farmers as individuals.

There are few opportunities to reach a wider audience than through the media outlets. So it's important that when we get the chance, we have members who are willing and able to represent what they do and why they do it when the media calls.

Want to amplify your message? Interact with the media. Here are some tips to make the media interview a success.

Interview Tips

- Determine your interview goal.
- Stay focused on your key message(s), and repeat them frequently.
- Think and speak in terms of headlines, followed by the story.
- Keep answers brief.
- Say only what you want to say, then stop.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Remember who your audience is.
- Never go "off the record."
- Meet media deadlines.

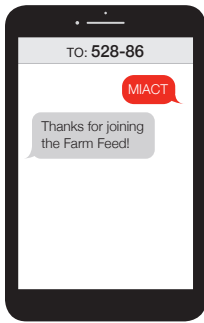
Questions to Ask When the Media Calls

- What is the reporter's name and media affiliation (radio, TV, newspaper, magazine, website)?
- What is the reporter's phone number and contact information?
- What is the topic of the interview?
- What is the story's objective or angle?
- Who is the primary audience?
- Am I the appropriate person for this story?
- Who else will be interviewed for this story?
- What are the date and time of the interview?
- What are the format and length of the interview?
- What is the anticipated date of airing or publication?
- Are there any additional information needs?
- Who else should be notified of this media opportunity?

Michigan Farm Bureau's media relations specialist is available to assist with interview scheduling, media training and to help with any questions you may have ahead of an interview.

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Numerous resources are available that provide local, state and national legislative and regulatory information.



Join the Farm Feed!

Sign up to receive a text message when Farm Bureau needs you to contact legislators.

Text the word "MIACT" to the number "52886" to sign up.

You'll only receive a message when it's of the utmost importance.

After joining, follow the link, enter your information, and submit the pre-written comments provided or edit the comments to include personalized details.

Michigan Farm Bureau | www.michfb.com

The Michigan Farm Bureau website offers a multitude of information from current news and press releases, event information, electronic policy book, and more.

State

State of Michigan | www.michigan.gov

Michigan Legislature | www.legislature.mi.gov

Michigan House of Representatives | www.house.mi.gov

Michigan Senate | www.senate.mi.gov

National

U.S. Senate | www.senate.gov

U.S. House of Representatives | www.house.gov

Congress.gov | www.congress.gov



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