



Advocacy and Political Affairs Best Management Practices for State Farm Bureaus

INFLUENCE. ACTION. IMPACT.

Contents

- 4 Farm Bureau Advocacy Program in 2015**
- 7 Strategic Action Plan for 2016**
- 8 Trends in Grassroots Advocacy**
- 12 Advocacy Tactics**
- 25 Advocate Resources**
- 27 Media Advocacy**
- 28 Social Media Advocacy**
- 29 Year-Round Advocacy**
- 33 2016 Congressional Calender**

Welcome Letter from Advocacy and Political Affairs Team,

As the nation's largest general farm organization, Farm Bureau fights for the critical issues affecting farmers and ranchers, rural communities and consumers.

This Advocacy and Political Affairs Best Management Practice (BMP) Guide will serve as a reference as Farm Bureau members interact with members of Congress and other elected officials. We hope you find this guide easy to use, and we encourage you to share it with your friends, neighbors and others who wish to join our goal of increasing Farm Bureau's effectiveness and visibility as the national ADVOCATE for farmers and ranchers.

In the following pages, you'll find information and resources designed to help our members engage in effective advocacy and political affairs programs. This BMP Guide is designed so each state and/or county Farm Bureau can review and analyze its programs and determine areas of strength and weakness.

Ultimately, every state will implement these advocacy and political affairs programs in different ways dependent on their needs. Additionally, the BMP Guide outlines advocacy and political affairs program areas and trends containing the most current and effective tactics state and county Farm Bureaus can utilize.

We hope this information is helpful to you.

Sincerely,
Your Farm Bureau Advocacy and Political Affairs Team

Cody Lyon
*Director of Advocacy
and Political Affairs*



Jordan Craig
*Director of Grassroots
Program Development*



Randy Dwyer
*Director of Grassroots
Program Development*



Chelsea Skovran
Program Assistant



FB ADVOCACY PROGRAM in 2015



ENGAGEMENT

23.8%

of the

17,855

total advocates in the FB Advocacy database responded to requests to take action.

The benchmark average for other advocacy groups is 2.9%

KEY GO TEAM ACTIVITIES

168

Members from 44 states.

GO Team members are AFBF's key policy and media advocates, specifically trained to influence Farm Bureau policy.

VISITS

2,415

Farm Bureau members visiting Washington, DC for issue briefings, advocacy training and meetings with members of Congress.

2015 Key Areas of Impact

- Congress passes Tax Relief Legislation beneficial for farmers and ranchers
- Congress passes Positive Train Control before deadline
- House passage of H.R. 1599 – GMO Labeling bill
- Congress passes bill stopping EPA overreach on WOTUS rule; President vetoes
- Promoting Advocacy with impact. Teaching Farm Bureau members the PIXAR® Way
- Creation of #Vote4Ag website to engage legislators and provide voter resources to Farm Bureau members (<http://election16.fb.org/>)

2015 Engagement by Issue THROUGH FB ADVOCACY WEBSITE



5,702

WOTUS Rule and Chesapeake Bay Litigation



1,016

Tax Extenders and Estate Taxes

GMO Labeling Bill

634



Advocacy Conference

508

advocates attend inaugural event



Demographics in 2015

168 MEMBERS FROM 44 STATES



108 are women



64 raise cattle
32 raise dairy animals
10 raise poultry
8 raise pork/swine
1 raises bison



76 farm corn
56 farm soybeans
57 farm wheat/hay
34 farm fruits and vegetables



8 Agro-tourism



Key Successes in 2015

8

Presented

and attended at Agchat National Advocacy Conference



13

Attended

issue-specific fly-ins on GMO Labeling and Immigration Reform



4

Testified

before Congressional Committees, including House Ways & Means



1

Participated

in a Press Call with the Secretary of Agriculture



FB ADVOCACY PROGRAM in 2015

“ [Farm Bureau’s] efforts to connect the work being done in rural America to its impact on the lives of every American played an instrumental role in shaping, passing and implementing the successful 2014 farm bill. ”

– Tom Vilsack
USDA Secretary



Online Metrics:

AVERAGE FOR ADVOCACY EMAILS

Open Rates

2015 FB Advocacy Average: 25%
2014 FB Advocacy Average: 30%
National Average: 16%



Click Throughs

2015 FB Advocacy Average: 5.1%
2014 FB Advocacy Average: 8.3%
National Average: 3.3%

Twitter



Average Impressions Each Month: 13.2K
Followers: 860

TOP TWEET OF THE YEAR:

Impressions: 3,759
Engagements: 64
Engagement Rate: 1.7%



FB Advocacy @FBAct · Oct 22

Thank you @SenStabenow for committing to work to get GMO labeling bill by year's end. Farmers and others need it and are watching closely

[View Tweet activity](#)

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN for 2016

The Strategic Action Plan outlines the top issue goals that AFBF will work to achieve this year, as well as a list of issues that could be elevated for increased strategic planning if new opportunities or challenges arise. These issues were selected by the AFBF board of directors immediately following the Annual Meeting.

Strategic Action Plan Goals are the focus of intensive, cross-functional collaboration and issues management among AFBF staff.

Food Security & Safety: Consumers deserve to have confidence that their food is safe and wholesome. We will create a more-positive dialog about modern agricultural practices. We will prevent actions that would reduce choice for consumers or for farmers and ranchers. We will monitor implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act and prevent actions that are unworkable, too costly or beyond limits on federal authority.

Regulatory Reform: All Americans, including farmers and ranchers, need a regulatory system that is fair, takes economic impacts into account and respects our freedoms. We will oppose expansion of federal jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act, advance legislation to reform the Endangered Species Act, preserve farmers' and ranchers' land-use and water rights and improve the federal regulatory process.

Technology: Technology enables farmers and ranchers to be more productive and efficient in using resources. We will protect farmers' and ranchers' access to biotechnology and protect their interests concerning other technologies, including unmanned aircraft and data services.

Trade: Selling more U.S. goods around the world boosts farm profitability and benefits rural communities. We seek congressional approval of the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement to increase U.S. farmers' and ranchers' access to foreign markets.

Watch-list Issues will be monitored for developments that warrant increased strategic planning and focus.

Energy: Support policy to enhance the availability and affordability of energy and encourages the growth of renewable energy production from farm sources.

Farm Economy: Support actions to mitigate the impact of a downturn in crop prices, as well as actions to address the specific needs of beginning farmers and ranchers.

Immigration Reform: Advance legislation that addresses agriculture's long- and short-term labor needs.

Tax Reform: Support implementation of enacted provisions that reduce farmers' and ranchers' tax burden.

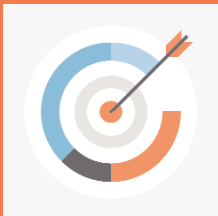
TRENDS IN GRASSROOT ADVOCACY

As part of Farm Bureau's membership in the Partnership for a More Perfect Union, the Congressional Management Foundation provides exclusive content from the Partnership's extensive research on technology, advocacy, constituent communications and social media. The information below provides the latest trends in grassroots advocacy to share with members.

INSIDE THE HALLS OF CONGRESS: Key Trends Driving the Decision-maker

It's Not the Delivery Method — It's the Content. There is virtually no distinction by the congressional staff surveyed between email and postal mail. They view them as equally influential to an undecided member. Nearly identical percentages of staffers said postal mail (90%) and email (88%) would influence an undecided member of Congress.

Citizens Have More Power Than They Realize. Most congressional staff believe constituent visits to the Washington office (97%) and to the district/state office (94%) have "some" or "a lot" of influence on an undecided member, more than any other influence group or strategy.

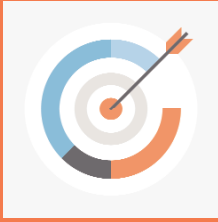


Congressional staff was asked, "How many issue areas/topics do you cover for your Member?" The survey found that almost 70% of staff handles six or more issue areas for their member and of that, almost 25% handle ten or more issues. Only 5.6% handle one or two issues. This means congressional staff can often benefit from the expert insights citizens can provide.

SOURCE: "From the Staffer's Office to the Member's Office" Partnership for a More Perfect Union, Copyright Congressional Management Foundation, <http://CongressFoundation.org>. Used with permission.

The Internet, Participation and Accountability. Most Hill staffers (87%) believe email and the internet have made it easier for constituents to become involved in public policy. And they feel that social media is vital in communicating the representative's message to constituents/stakeholders.

Social Media Used to Listen and Communicate. Congressional offices are integrating social media tools into their operations, both to gain an understanding of constituents' opinions and to communicate information about the members' views. More than 76% of congressional staff respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" that "social media enabled us to have more meaningful interactions with constituents." And another 70% of staff agreed that "social media have made members/senators more accountable to constituents."



When asked, "How many similar comments on a social media post is enough for your office to pay attention to?" the response received was: *80% of staff surveyed said 30 or fewer responses to their social media posts are enough to get the office to "pay attention" and of that, 35% said that less than 10 comments would get their attention.*

SOURCE: "#SocialCongress 2015" Partnership for a More Perfect Union, Copyright Congressional Management Foundation, <http://CongressFoundation.org>. Used with permission.

The Members of Congress and Congressional Staff

57 years
The average age of members of the House at the beginning of the 114th Congress

61 years
The average age of senators at the beginning of the 114th Congress



The overwhelming majority of members of Congress have a **college education**



The **dominant professions** of members are public service/politics, business and law



Most members identify as **Christians, and Protestants** collectively constitute the majority religious affiliation. Roman Catholics account for the largest single religious denomination, and numerous other affiliations are represented

8.8 Years (4.4 terms)
The average length of service for a U.S. representative at the beginning of the 114th Congress

9.7 Years (1.6 terms)
The average length of service for a senator at the beginning of the 114th Congress



108 women (a record number) serve in the 114th Congress: 88 in the House, including 4 delegates*, and 20 in the Senate

There are **46 African American** Members of the House and 2 in the Senate. This House number includes two delegates.

There are **38 Hispanic or Latino** members (a record number) serving: 34 in the House, including 1 delegate and the Resident Commissioner, and 4 in the Senate

A record **14 members** (11 representatives, 2 delegates and 1 senator) are Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders.

2 American Indians (Native Americans) serve in the House

The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) partnered to conduct a study about working in Congress. Key findings include:

Work Schedules. Congressional staff, both in Washington and in district and state offices, work more than 40 hours per week on average. Washington staff report that they work 53 hours per week when their chamber is in session, compared to 43 hours per week when out of session. For the district/state staff, the number of hours worked per week seems stable (45–47 hours) irrespective of whether their chamber is in session or not.

Work Commitment: Despite the long hours, congressional staff display a high level of commitment to their jobs. Almost 75% of the respondents rated “meaningfulness of their jobs” as being very important to them, as compared to 35% of U.S. employees who held similar beliefs.

Staff Opinions about Working in Congress. Many congressional staff feel that they do not have enough time to perform assigned tasks. When asked, “I usually have enough time to get everything done,” 33% disagreed. This sentiment is felt most strongly among staff in policy/legislative/research roles, with almost half (48%) reporting that they disagree with this statement.

THE NATIONAL PICTURE: Key U.S. Census Data

The average size of a congressional district based on the 2010 Census apportionment population is 710,767. This is more than triple the average district size of 210,328 based on the 1910 Census apportionment. On average, congressional districts today have 63,815 more people than they did during the 2000 Census.

Congressional districts face different challenges due to a mix of factors that include urban/rural make-up, geographic structure and socioeconomic composition.

One key trend impacting Farm Bureau’s advocacy efforts is the movement of the population to urbanized areas. The U.S. Census Bureau provides key data in the location of the nation’s population, including urban and rural classifications. The Census Bureau’s urban-rural classification is fundamentally a delineation of geographical areas, identifying both individual urban areas and the rural areas of the nation.

Based on current Census 2010 data for the 114th Congress:

- 40 congressional districts are 100% urban.
- 155 districts are at least 95% urban.
- More than half of the 435 districts are at least 86% urban.
- Only 34 districts are more than 50% rural.

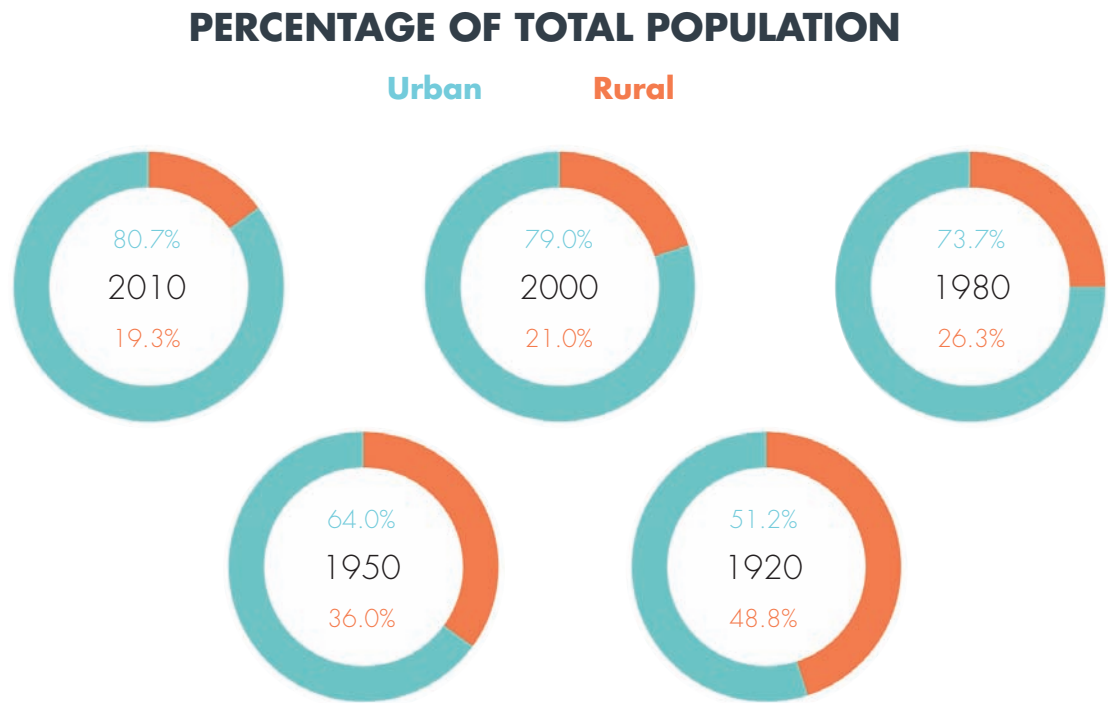
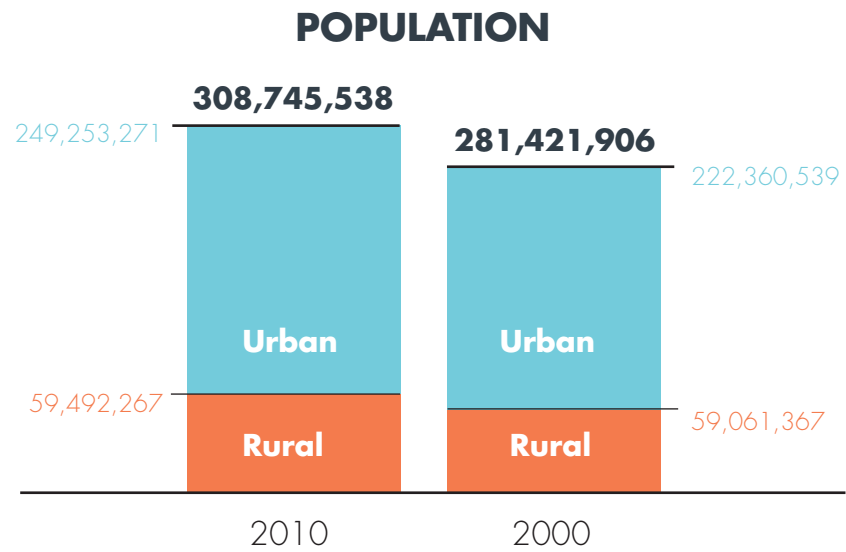
The most rural district is found in Kentucky and it is 76.5% rural (KY-5/Appalachia).

According to the Census Bureau, an urban area will comprise a densely settled core of census tracts and/or census blocks that meet minimum population density requirements, along with adjacent territory containing non-residential urban land uses as well as territory with low population density included to link outlying densely settled territory with the densely settled core. To qualify as an urban area, the territory

identified according to criteria must encompass at least 2,500 people, at least 1,500 of which reside outside institutional group quarters.

“Rural” encompasses all population, housing and territory not included within an urban area.

The charts below highlight the growing urban population and declining rural population in the United States:



ADVOCACY TACTICS

■ GETTING THE IMPACT: Improving Advocacy Emails to Get the Action You Want

A successful advocacy email campaign can ensure that your issue is on the minds of policymakers. Below are tactical points to increase your action rate and build a successful advocacy email program.

The first and most important rule: Brevity creates remembrance and understanding. Assume nothing — the reader/viewer decides what is meant. In grassroots messaging, there is a need to show conflict and what the reader can do to resolve the conflict.

For a successful Call-to-Action, it is important to allow the reader to be a participant in the message.

Writing an impactful action alert, means that you:

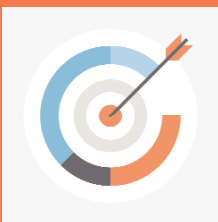
1. Provide a consequence to act/not to act.
2. Motivate the reader do the right thing.
3. Act by providing a specific demand.
4. Provide a deadline for action to be taken.

For your Call-to-Action to have an impact, we recommend that action alerts:

1. Keep requests simple but complete: a 250-word maximum is ideal.
2. Use images/videos to improve your click-through rate.
3. Provide links to additional information.

Another useful tool to gauge the success of your Call-to-Action is to use A/B Message Testing. A/B testing (also known as split testing or bucket testing) is a method of comparing two versions of a webpage or message against each other to determine which one performs better. A/B testing uses data and statistics to improve conversion rates.

Through most advocacy platforms, you can setup two or more messages and determine which headline or subject line is getting the most action. Knowing this will help you to better engage your advocates.



How much personalization is required to get the attention of congressional staff? According to a report of more than 300 House and Senate legislative directors and legislative aides, 25% to 50% personalization in a communication will catch the attention of 75% of congressional staff.

OUR RECOMEMNDATION: Combine a personal story or personal impact with any and all policy asks.

SOURCE: "From the Staffer's Office to the Member's Office" Partnership for a More Perfect Union, Copyright Congressional Management Foundation, <http://CongressFoundation.org>. Used with permission.

■ GETTING THE IMPACT: Meetings with Members of Congress

Visiting with members of Congress and their staff is a time-honored and effective advocacy tactic for Farm Bureaus. Study after study continues to demonstrate that the in-person, face-to-face meetings have the most influence on a member of Congress. Why? The ability to interact by asking questions and getting answers helps develop strong relationships.

Fortunately, meetings can happen in either Washington, D.C. or in your community.



Information Congressional staff was asked, “The Member of Congress prefers to have meetings with constituent groups in...” We found that while there is little differentiation in preference between Washington, D.C. and the district, over 70% have no preference at all. While constituents (our Farm Bureau members) often view Washington as the **ONLY** place to meet lawmakers, this research suggests that an in-district strategy is also available. Legislators often are more relaxed and have additional time to spend with constituents. Also, without the legislative demands of Washington, members can focus more on the concerns of constituents.

SOURCE: “Basket or Waste Basket: Where Do Your Policy Talking Points Go?” Partnership for a More Perfect Union, Copyright Congressional Management Foundation, <http://CongressFoundation.org>. Used with permission.

Tips for a Good Legislative Visit to Washington, D.C.

A good and successful visit to Washington begins with having a solid plan for your visit commonly called a fly-in. There are several key factors to keep in mind.

First, when is the best time to hold your fly-in? Most organizations (47%) host their fly-ins in April and May. Only 9% conduct their fly-ins in September.

Be sure to review the congressional calendar on page 33 or download it (<http://cdn.rollcall.com/pdfs/Congressional-Calendar-2016.pdf>) for the dates when one or both chambers will be in session. This will help you determine when to travel to Washington, D.C. for maximum impact with legislators and D.C.-based staff.

SOURCE: Public Affairs Council “Fly-In Strategy Survey” 2015

Second, how far in advance should you request a meeting? More than 75% of Chiefs of Staff said between 3–4 weeks in advance is ideal.



Consider offering advanced in-depth advocacy training; only 44% of organizations provide advanced advocacy training at their fly-in.

SOURCE: Public Affairs Council "Fly-In Strategy Survey" 2015

Once you have scheduled your meeting(s), consider these tips to enhance and make your visits as effective as possible:

- Review the legislator's website in advance and know what committees the legislator is on.
- Know if the legislator has a particular issue interest. What is Farm Bureau's position?
- In advance, ask congressional staff if there's anything specific the legislator is working on that's important to your issues (i.e., "Dear Colleague" letter or subcommittee action).
- Send your advocacy material to your staff contact before your meeting. This helps legislators and staff prepare for your meeting.

See the next two pages for a "Pre Fly-In Checklist" and "What to Say During a Congressional Meeting."

Pre-Fly-In Checklist

A Citizen Advocate's To-Do List for Preparing for a Meeting with Congress

- ☐ **Legislator Profile.** Review or create a short profile for each of the Senator(s) and Representative(s) with whom you've scheduled meetings. Identify any connections to your issue or group, as well as past interactions.
- ☐ **Personal Story.** Whose story will you tell? Do you have a photo of a person or family who is affected by the issue you'll be discussing with Congress? Use the Seven Elements of Advocacy Storytelling to help build your narrative.
- ☐ **Economic Impact.** Describe the political and economic impact of your organization in the district or state for staffers with whom you're meeting. Edit or add to any data provided by the national office.
- ☐ **Pull Together Your "Ask."** Synthesize your content (economic impact, personal story, connections to legislator) in one "pitch." Don't just use the content created by the national office – localize it to YOUR community/organization/state. Create a bulleted outline you can practice.
- ☐ **Be Ready to Provide Materials in Advance.** Have a copy of whatever you'll be bringing to the office and be prepared to send it 24-72 hours prior to your meeting. Members and staff appreciate a "read-ahead" document to understand your issue better.
- ☐ **Be Ready with a "Thank You" Strategy.** Whom in the office are you going to thank; what are you going to say to them; what are their email addresses? Even short notes that simply say "thanks for taking the meeting" are greatly appreciated (and rare) in Congress.
- ☐ **Be Ready with a "Letter to the Editor" Strategy.** If you think it appropriate, consider what kind of follow-up letter to the editor you'll be drafting. It could be a letter to: 1) thank legislator for their support; 2) include a "call to action" for fellow constituents to contact the legislator (if the legislator did not provide a firm answer); 3) politely criticize the legislator (if they turned you down). Identify newspaper outlets in advance of the meeting and learn their policies for submitting letters to the editor.
- ☐ **Be Ready with a Social Media Strategy.** Create an "editorial calendar" of tweets and Facebook posts and draft them in advance. Have someone in your local organization (with your social media account logins) ready to support and post immediately before, during, and after you visit. Remember to include the legislator's Twitter handle in tweets to get the attention of the congressional office.

Copyright 2016 – Congressional Management Foundation



Please copy and share
with your advocates



What to Say During a Congressional Meeting

- ☐ **PLAN YOUR STORY.** Planning is everything. Take the time to develop, rework and refine your stance in advance. In other words, be prepared.
- ☐ **LISTEN.** Let the official express his or her point of view.
- ☐ **BE COURTEOUS.** Even if they vehemently disagree with you, they may support our future efforts. It's important not to burn any bridges.
- ☐ **BE RESPECTFUL OF TIME.** Get in and out of an official's office quickly and having made "the ask." Show that you know the value of his or her time.
- ☐ **SIMPLICITY.** Keep it simple! Don't be too technical, too detailed, too complex or too oblique. Get to the point, cover the basics and make sure the official understands your main point.
- ☐ **KEEP YOUR GROUP SMALL.** An unwieldy group can make everyone uncomfortable, distract from your message and waste valuable time getting set up. Make certain the group has already decided on a spokesperson and stick with that decision.
- ☐ **NEVER TELL A LIE.** Your reputation is everything. You — and the organization — lose credibility if you lie. If you don't know the answer to a question, admit you don't know, but that you'll find out and then follow up. Be sure to let your state Farm Bureau staff and AFBF staff know so we can help.
- ☐ **DON'T FORGET TO CLOSE.** Always ask for the official's vote or support. Remember to pause and wait for a response.
- ☐ **THANK YOU.** Remember to call/send a note to your elected official as a reminder of your visit, and express thanks for the time and support. An example is provided at the end of this section.
- ☐ **DON'T TALK MONEY.** Don't combine a legislative request to a past or future campaign donation. This is illegal. Keep your legislative discussions focused on policy. Save the campaign talk for a fundraising event.

Bonus Points = Remember to mention the staff you met with and how helpful they were to your issues. Building relationships with Hill staff is very important, as they make sure the legislator knows your position on important issues.



Please copy and share
with your advocates

Post-meeting

After your successful visits to your congressional delegation, the work is not yet complete. Reporting and thank-you letters are an important, and necessary, step to gain valuable insight from the attendees and continue to engage with the staff.

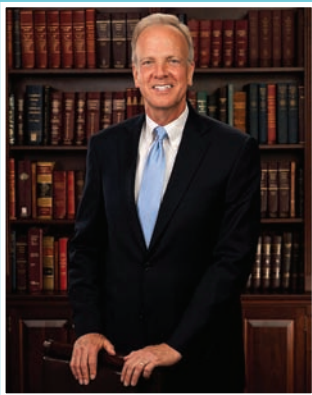
For unanswered questions and follow-up to the congressional staff, you will need to know who will respond. For example, will the state Farm Bureau staff, county leader or meeting attendee provide the follow-up with the legislative office? This can include answers to pending questions and additional materials.

A thank-you note or email is a great way to show your appreciation for the meeting. Very few constituents or groups will do this step. When someone does, the congressional staffs remember who and which group. And, on your next visit, you will be treated better than other groups that did not!

Here are some examples of how to say thank you:

- Use personal and organizational social media to express thanks for the opportunity to visit.
- Post a photo with participants in the office or discussing the issues.
- Send a letter to your local paper, thanking your legislator; mention your issues and why they're important.
- Post a thank you to the legislator's Facebook along with a photo of who visited. Mention your issues once again.
- Send a letter of thanks to your legislator and remember to mention the staff you may have met.

“



Farm Bureau says this is what's affecting us today. This will determine if we're able to earn a living in agriculture. This issue will determine if my son or daughter can return to the family farm. Those are the kind of priorities that are very beneficial to me.

”

– Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS)

■ GETTING THE IMPACT: Successful In-District Visits/Farm Tours

District offices should receive more attention than they have in the past because they are designed to keep your representative apprised of the local issues while they are in Washington, D.C. District staff tend to be long-time employees and have built solid relationships with their boss and with opinion leaders in the district, allowing them to serve as an “early warning system” for the legislator on important local issues.

Regular meetings with congressional staff provide an excellent opportunity to meet Farm Bureau leaders and learn about the issues facing agriculture. District staff members can be great sounding boards and frequently have the insight to solve problems.

Arrange a district office visit by Farm Bureau leaders to introduce the organization to the district staff. This meeting can begin to establish a working relationship with the staff. Provide staff with membership numbers (votes), number of families, age span of membership and any information to help outline the importance of agriculture to the economy of the district.

Another key function of the district office staff is to control the schedule when the member of Congress returns to the district. This is determined as a result of district staff meeting with constituents to help them decide where the congressman/congresswoman needs to spend time. District meetings provide more quality time for Farm Bureau members because they get more time with the member than they often would on a D.C. visit. This is because they have undivided attention.

Finally, district office staff monitor newspapers in the region and provide the D.C. office feedback on how the D.C. activities are being perceived back home in the district. County Farm Bureau members should write short (less than 150 words) letters to the local newspaper praising actions taken by a member of Congress (i.e., voting in support of an issue important to farmers). These letters are usually clipped and shared with staff in Washington, D.C. These same messages can be shared on social media and posted to the legislator’s Facebook page.

Farm tours provide one of the most effective methods of influencing decision makers and showcasing a farm or ranch to government and community leaders. In an era of quality communications trumping quantity, face-to-face communications with members of Congress and their staffs produce particularly effective advocacy.

Extend an invitation to the district office staff to go on a special agriculture tour to introduce them to agriculture and the issues facing family farmers. This can lead to the member of Congress taking a farm/ranch tour when they are back in the district.

A visit to a farm will provide a valuable opportunity to meet a large number of Farm Bureau members. They will learn the role the farm and ranch plays in the community. Farm tours present you and other staff a chance to get to know legislators, put a face and name behind your business and pass along a firsthand description of the farm’s progress and problems.

Finally, farm tours can provide a great media opportunity.



How to Host a Farm Tour

A visit to a farm will give your senators, congressional representatives, state legislators or local officials the valuable opportunity to meet a large number of their constituents while helping them develop a good sense of the role the facility plays in the community. Farm tours present you and other staff a chance to get to know legislators, put a face and name behind your business and pass along a firsthand description of the farm's progress and problems.

DETERMINE THE AGENDA. Is your goal to address specific legislation or develop the relationship? Tailor your agenda to the legislator's interests as this will help increase the invitation's likelihood of acceptance. Here are the types of facts your legislator might want to know:

- The number of people your farm employs.
- The average payroll of your farm.
- Commodities you produce or service you provide.
- The amount of sales dollars and how they are allocated for supplies, rent, depreciation, payroll and taxes.
- Dollars paid in federal, state and local taxes.
- Dollars paid in property taxes.
- Dollars spent locally to purchase supplies, materials and services.
- Facility improvements and new equipment.
- Research conducted on the farm.
- Employee benefits offered by the employer.
- Aid to schools and the local community.
- Special programs and services your farm provides.
- Continuing education programs offered to employees.
- Community improvement projects in which your farm or ranch is involved.
- Other industries in the area which depend upon your facility for supplies.
- Farm or ranch environmental problems and cleanup efforts/costs.
- Amount of energy your farm or ranch consumes in daily operation, energy-saving measures you have implemented and problems of energy supply.
- Safety and health standards in the farm — new protective equipment, facilities or technology.

HAVE A DEFINED TOUR SCHEDULE. Plan it to allow enough time to tour the farm and its facilities and to enjoy informal discussion.

MAP OUT THE TOUR. Choose the particular areas that illustrate the points you want to make. Include quiet areas to talk along the way.



Please copy and share
with your advocates

MAKE SURE KEY MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT ARE OPERATIONAL. Action is essential for an interesting tour. Rope off any potentially hazardous areas. Be sure adequate sets of safety gear are available for all guests.

LET OTHER FARM BUREAU MEMBERS KNOW. Share the exact date and time of the visit in advance.

RECRUIT KEY CONTACTS. Invite prominent organizational leaders to play a role in the visit and create buzz.

CONSIDER FOLLOWING THE TOUR WITH A SHORT PRIVATE DISCUSSION IN YOUR OFFICE. It might be advantageous to arrange for the legislator to meet with selected employees. In either case, discuss with the legislator those issues of greatest importance to the company and the facility.



Please copy and share
with your advocates

■ GETTING THE IMPACT: Effective Social Media and Digital Advocacy

Social media can have tremendous rewards for your state Farm Bureau advocacy efforts, if you're creative and persistent. Common platforms for advocacy include Facebook and Twitter, but new tools (Pinterest, Tumblr and Instagram, for example) are becoming more widely used every week. Talk to others about what they're doing, and see how your efforts can fit into or shape what's already happening. It's also a good idea to talk to your legislator's staff to see what social media platforms they are using, so you can stay current with their communication efforts.



Thirty or fewer similar comments on a social media post are enough to get an office's attention, but they need to be posted quickly or they may not be seen.

About one-third (35%) of the respondents said it takes fewer than 10 similar comments for their offices to pay attention, and nearly half (45%) said their offices will pay attention to between 10

and 30 similar comments. However, the more time that passes after an office posts on social media, the less likely it will be that staff will review the response.

OUR RECOMMENDATION: Always tweet your delegation your Calls-to-Action, key issue statements and pictures.

SOURCE: "#SocialCongress 2015" Partnership for a More Perfect Union, Copyright Congressional Management Foundation, <http://CongressFoundation.org>. Used with permission.

With social media, it is important to know the audience and whether the person or group you are trying to influence is using a similar social media platform.

For example, social media use among Congress has grown exponentially since 2009, and as of 2016, 98 percent of Congress uses at least one social media platform and 72 percent use three platforms.

The media predominately used Twitter. In fact, to get the attention of a reporter, it may be easiest to tweet them!

Creating Social Media Strategy

The first step in utilizing social media is to create a strategy. Creating a strategy includes:

1. Setting your objectives. Is your goal narrow (publicizing an event) or broad (building and engaging with a community or coalition)?
2. Identifying the audience you would like to reach. Are you primarily communicating with people who are already familiar with Farm Bureau, such as your members and advocates? Or are you reaching out to consumers on a key issue or as potential members and supporters?
3. Selecting the social media platforms you plan to focus on. This decision should be guided by your objectives and intended audience. The most well-known and easy-to-use are Facebook and Twitter, so if you only plan to utilize one or two platforms, we recommend focusing on those.

4. Gathering resources and materials to share through social media. Posts with videos and graphics increase your impact over text-only posts.

5. Appointing someone or a team of people to manage your social media presence. Although there are no prerequisites for using social media, individuals with backgrounds in communications, marketing or public relations can be great assets. Learning the technology is fairly simple, but you may want to select someone who is comfortable and familiar with technology.

General Principles for Effectively Using Social Media

Be genuine. Let your personality show, use humor and be transparent about who is posting content. Try not to simply broadcast; rather, when possible, speak as an individual, to individuals. This will help earn you credibility as a trusted source.

Stay focused. The people and organizations that follow you on social media have certain expectations about the type of content you post and the way in which you engage with them. If you stray too far from your objectives, you will lose the trust and attention of your “community.”

Be reliable. Share quality content from trusted sources, and avoid amplifying erroneous messages from unreliable sources. Reliability also means posting to your social media services regularly. Frequently sharing reliable, meaningful content helps establish you as an important source of information and ideas.

Get social. Above all else, social media is about conversation. Share and comment on other people’s or organizations’ posts to start new conversations, and join in the conversations that are occurring on your social media pages. The more you engage with your followers, the more they will understand that your priorities are their priorities too.



Key Points to Know:

- Social media is a conversation, not a monologue.
- Create a strategy for using social media as part of your overall advocacy efforts.
- The most effective way to utilize your social media accounts is to post regularly.
- Be genuine. Let the personality show when posting something on social media.



■ GETTING THE IMPACT: Building, Developing and Utilizing an Ambassador and Key Contact Team

Ambassador or key contact programs are vital in today's advocacy environment. Having a large grassroots army that can mobilize on a range of issues is necessary, but not sufficient. Farm Bureau needs to be able to call on a committed group of activists who are willing to go above and beyond. This is why AFBF created the GO Team, or Grassroots Outreach Team.



Best practices in issue advocacy and recent polls of congressional offices reinforce this concept: Direct contact from constituents with members of Congress and staff is the most effective way to influence policy. Other critical factors influencing legislators are stories about the real-world ramifications of legislative action — or inaction. These stories, told in local media, can have an important influence on a congressional member's willingness to move forward — or stop — critical legislation.

Consumers are also focusing more closely on issues that directly affect agriculture. It is vital for farmers and ranchers to reach out to consumers through social media to educate them on a variety of issues.

AFBF's Grassroots Outreach Team, or GO Team, helps us meet this reality.

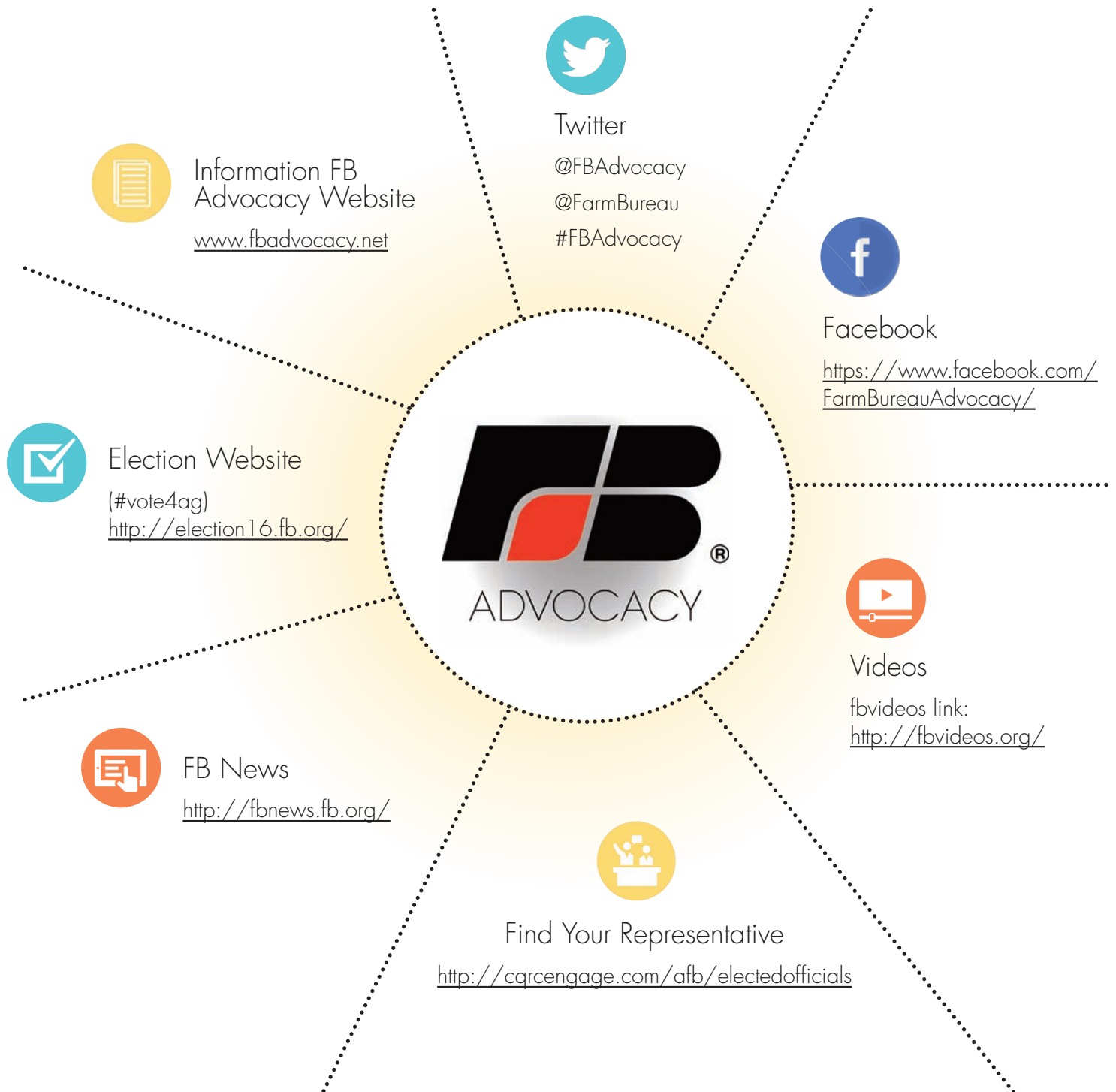
Unlike a large group of traditional grassroots advocates, a key contact program focuses on a narrower subset of individuals. Specifically, a "key contact" is someone who either (1) has an established relationship with an elected official; (2) has a comfort level with engaging in intense advocacy activities, such as making phone calls or attending in-person visits; or (3) has built up political capital through involvement in local civic organizations/groups like the PTA, economic development boards and/or charities.

Here are seven steps to build your state Farm Bureau Key Contact Program:

1. **Begin building in advance.** An effective key contact program takes time to create. It is not something you can develop overnight when your organization is facing an unexpected crisis. If you expect a tough legislative fight in the future, start thinking about a key contact program now.
2. **Focus on geography.** You may not need a key contact program that spans all the counties in your state. Outline your legislative goals for the next several years and figure out which congressional districts are most important to meet those goals. Concentrate your key contact program in these areas.
3. **Analyze your current assets.** Far too many organizations try to jumpstart a key contact program by starting from scratch instead of looking back to see who has taken action in the past. Start with your existing assets and build from there.

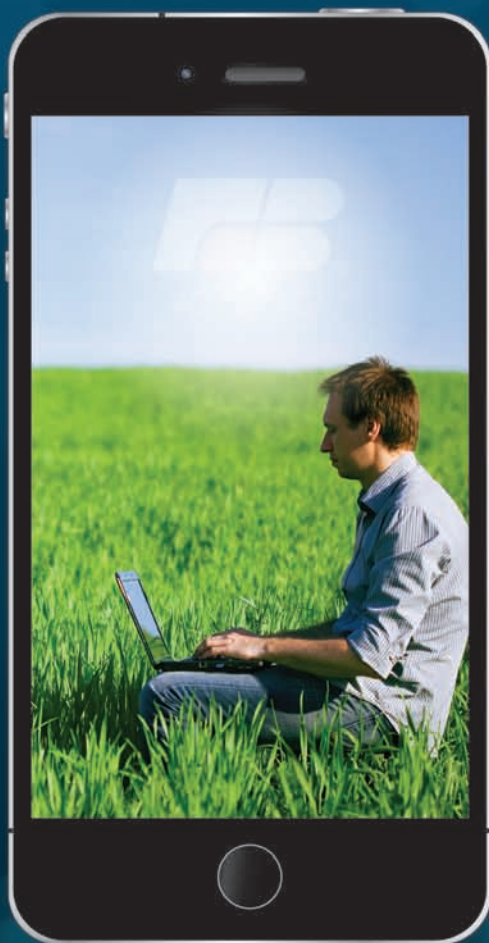
4. **Survey your entire membership.** You should consider everyone, regardless of whether or not they have taken action in the past. You never know who is going to turn out to be a great advocate. A member may not be interested in politics, but is willing to help because a son plays on a soccer team with a senator's son. When you survey your membership, your goal should be to figure out who has the key relationships, what those relationships are and how strong they are. You may find your best advocates from the most unlikely of sources.
 5. **Continually educate and inform your key contacts.** The biggest mistake organizations make is to build a key contact list and then neglect it for three, six or even twelve months when there is no pressing legislative goal. You should provide your key contacts with special insider information on a regular basis to keep them engaged.
 6. **Reward and recognize.** Your organization should brainstorm creative ways to reward and recognize your best advocates. For example, provide an advocacy network which allows advocates to log into a website to report each action taken, place themselves on an advocacy map and earn points toward the ranking of "super activist." Your efforts to reward advocates will dramatically increase participation within your network. Your efforts to recognize top activists will pay off.
 7. **Continually recruit and refine your efforts.** Don't neglect newcomers. You should regularly adjust your key contact program to be sure it is working effectively.
-

Advocate Resources



WE ARE NOW ON YOUR PHONE!

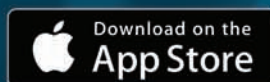
STAY CONNECTED FROM
THE FIELD AND ON THE FARM.



FEATURES:

- **TAKE ACTION**
- **ISSUES**
- **NEWS & REPORTS**
- **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Search "FBACT"
or "Farm Bureau
Advocacy" in the:



**DOWNLOAD
OUR NEW
MOBILE APP
FOR FREE!**

"What a great way to help family farmers and ranchers
get their voices heard in government." —buckeye86

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

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 and ranchers do their jobs. Studies show that the public has a high level of trust for farmers and ranchers 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 find a way 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.
- Block and bridge to refocus the interview or address difficult questions.
- 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.

■ When the Media Calls ... Questions to Ask

- What is the reporter's name and media affiliation (*radio, TV, newspaper, magazine, website*)?
- What are 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?

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

SOCIAL MEDIA ADVOCACY

Social media...Is there a role? Is it growing? Is it effective? Who uses it? How has different technologies impacted advocacy efforts? Social media...Does it educate? Communicate? Organize? YES to all of these!

Social media allows for more than just broadcasting your messaging. You can listen, curate and converse in a way that was never possible before. Social media is a two-way street. Generally speaking, anyone and everyone can see what you are saying online. This can be an advantage or a disadvantage, so think carefully before posting.

REMEMBER: Congressional Management Foundation found that ten or fewer posts on social media would cause 35% of congressional offices to pay attention to an issue.

■ Best Practices for Social Media:

Good: Follow your U.S. senators and representatives.

Better: Follow your members of Congress, and follow their Chief of Staff. If you've met their Legislative Directors on your issues, follow them too. More is better.

Best: Like and share the tweets with your followers. Respond to their tweets. Provide positive feedback on your issues. Be known as a reliable and honest source of information to your legislators.

■ Hot Trends and Gee-Whiz Stats about Social Media



Facebook is used daily by 62% of all U.S. adults. 97 of the 100 senators have a Facebook page. 424 of the 435 members of the House have a Facebook page.



About 23% of online adults use **Twitter**. Twitter is popular with those under 50 and college educated. All 100 U.S. senators have a Twitter account, whereas 420 of the 435 members of the House have a Twitter account.



28% of online adults use **Instagram**. Over half (53%) of Instagram users are 18–29 years old.



Pinterest is used by 31% of adult online users or 47 million active users in the United States.

Want to find a way to amplify your message?
Post on social media.

YEAR ROUND ADVOCACY

February

Advocacy Conference

**March**

In-District Meetings

**April**

Media Outreach

**May**Share Your Story and
Advocate Recruitment**June**

Telephone Outreach

**July**

Member Recruitment

**August**Town Halls & In-
District Meetings**September**

Social Media Outreach

**October**Candidate Events and
Advocate Recruitment**November**VOTE! And Policy
Development**December**Learn About
Legislators & Staff**January**Welcome New
Members of the
115th Congress
and the New
U.S. President!

YEAR ROUND ADVOCACY

Continuous year-round efforts advocating back home makes all the difference. Your work shouldn't be something that only takes place in Washington, D.C. Partner with your state Farm Bureau to try some of the following ideas throughout the coming year. The activities and times are suggestions as many can occur at the same time or at various times of the year.

JANUARY: Welcome Back Congress & Schedule Your Visit

Action Item: It's time to reconnect with your elected officials. The offices may have new staff and they need to know who you are. Also, now is the time for you to schedule your visit for February.

FEBRUARY: Prepare for Advocacy Conference

Action Item: Prepare for the Farm Bureau Advocacy Conference. It's that time of year! As you prepare to meet with legislators in D.C., practice delivering a message that will resonate using the tips in this guide.

MARCH: In-District Meetings & Local Events

Action Item: Attend or host a local event for legislators who will be in the state and district. Now is a great time to make plans to attend. Remember to engage the policymaker before, during and after the event via their social media profile(s) and in-person at the event.

APRIL: Media Outreach

Action Item: Write a letter to the editor, an editorial, a blog entry for a local publication or a social media post. Find a way to share your ag story. Urge readers to contact their representatives and ask for their support on policy/legislation. Bring awareness on policy issues to farms and ranches in your area.

MAY: Advocate Recruitment

Action Item: Thank your existing group of advocates and tell them about any success story. Keep them active and ask them to join your social media efforts. Plan to recruit new members through a key contact program (see outline provided in this guide). Survey your advocates to see if they're willing to host a farm tour or other event.

JUNE: Telephone Outreach

Action Item: June is one the most productive months for Congress, so be sure to call your elected officials and share Farm Bureau's positions on our key issues.



JULY: Member Recruitment & Local Events

Action Item: Action Item: Tie-in local events (parades, fairs, etc.) including July 4th holiday and weekend events with a Farm Bureau membership drive! Let others know what Farm Bureau achieves through advocacy, in the local community and how you have benefited from Farm Bureau's leadership development programs.

Membership is personal. It is not a subscription. It is not a transaction. It is a relationship. Tell your story of membership to encourage others to join!

AUGUST: Town Halls, Coffees with Congress & Candidate Events

Action Item: This is the height of the campaign season, so many candidates and elected officials host town hall meetings and other community events. Many state and county Farm Bureaus host their own meetings during this time. Attend an event and talk about Farm Bureau's priority issues. Be sure to invite your friends. Candidates are looking for endorsements from important organizations at this time of year. If your Farm Bureau offers endorsements, they should be finalized soon.

SEPTEMBER: Social Media Outreach

Action Item: Comment on a news article critical to agriculture or each day share posts within your network. Find a way to share story about your farm or ranch. Urge readers to contact their representatives and ask for their support on policy/legislation. Bring awareness on policy issues to farms and ranches in your area.

Not on social media? Now is the time to sign-up for Facebook or Twitter. Follow or Friend your state Farm Bureau, AFBF, news outlets, celebrities and others.

OCTOBER: Candidate Events

Action Item: As Election Day draws near, campaigns need volunteers. And most candidates remember the volunteers who helped get them elected! In fact, when you send a message or request a meeting, your name is highlighted as a valued constituent. If your legislator is working hard for you, then it's important to help keep them in office. If your Farm Bureau has a candidate endorsement process in place, now is the time to promote those endorsements.

NOVEMBER: VOTE! And Policy Development Activities

Action Item: The key of Farm Bureau's advocacy activities is the grassroots policy development process. As your county and state Farm Bureau begin submitting resolutions to the Policy Book, take the opportunity to witness the process or serve as a delegate at your state's Annual Meeting.

DECEMBER/JANUARY: Legislative Research

Action Item: Learn more about your legislators and their staff. In many cases, knowing staff can keep your issues as a top priority, even more so than knowing the elected official. Many D.C. policy staff make their way to the district during the year. Get to know them; they have a direct line to the legislator. Ask how they like to communicate: do they prefer email, phone, social media or personal visits?

YEAR-ROUND ACTIVITIES

- **Recruit, Recruit, Recruit.** Urge friends, Farm Bureau members and others in your community to get involved. Urge them to join your state's advocacy program.
- **Make Phone Calls.** A phone call may be the most effective alternative to in-person meetings with elected officials. It never hurts to call a local office with new information or to urge action on a bill. Reaffirm your commitment to serve as a resource and point of contact on Farm Bureau's priority issues.
- **Media Messaging.** Radio? TV? Blogs? Newspapers? Social networks? Each can help you get the word out. Whether it's sound bites, pictures, stories or helpful facts, find your "hook," learn a reporters' needs and you'll be on your way to helpful publicity. Share information with legislators on Twitter and Facebook or find mutual connections on Linked-In. Monitor legislator activities for insights into their interests and actions, then communicate with them directly.
- **Take Action.** Take action online via alerts sent by AFBF and your state Farm Bureau.
- **Report.** Report your activities at fbadvocacy@fb.org.



2016 Congressional Calendar



- Both chambers in session
- Both chambers in recess
- Senate in session
- House in session
- Federal holiday

January

M	T	W	T	F
				1 New Year's Day
4	5 House convenes	6	7	8
11 Senate convenes	12	13	14	15
18 MLK Jr. Day	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

February

M	T	W	T	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15 Presidents Day	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29				

March

M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25 Good Friday
28	29	30	31	

April

M	T	W	T	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

May

M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30 Memorial Day	31			

June

M	T	W	T	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	

July

M	T	W	T	F
				1
4 Independence Day	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
[REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION]				
25	26	27	28	29
[DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION]				

August

M	T	W	T	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

September

M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5 Labor Day	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

October

M	T	W	T	F
3	4 Rosh Hashanah ends	5	6	7
10 Columbus Day	11 Yom Kippur begins	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
31				

November

M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8 Election Day	9	10	11 Veterans Day
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24 Thanksgiving	25
28	29	30		

December

M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26 Christmas (Federal)	27	28	29	30

Hanukkah begins
Dec. 24



American Farm Bureau Federation
600 Maryland Ave., SW, Suite 1000W
Washington, DC 20024
www.fb.org
202-406-3736

INFLUENCE. ACTION. IMPACT.