

BLUEPRINT FOR GRASSROOTS ACTION



Why should Farm Bureau members be engaged in public policy?

Farm Bureau has a long tradition of being one of the most recognized organizations at the Ohio Statehouse and the U.S. Capitol. This continues today because of our comprehensive grassroots efforts. Here are just a few reasons why you should get involved:

- Agriculture is your livelihood and grassroots political action is a cost of doing business.
- Strength in numbers – the more individual members engaged in the process, the more effective the group.
- Your elected officials need to hear from you personally, not just your lobbyists in Columbus and Washington, D.C.
- Politics is a contact sport and only those that have effective contact with their elected officials win.
- Opponents of agriculture are involved and are working against your interests.

How can Farm Bureau members be engaged in public policy?

Farm Bureau is an organization that capitalizes on the power of working together. It is through collaborative efforts we achieve our individual and organizational goals. To this end, each county Farm Bureau has a public policy action team that has at its core the following functions: policy development, policy implementation and political action.

Learn more about farm friendly candidates and ways to get involved at farmvotesmatter.org

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Each year county Farm Bureaus engage in policy development. Through this process our members discuss the major issues that are impacting the agriculture industry and make policy suggestions at the local, state and national levels. The policies suggested lead to discussion, debate and approval of a set of policy resolutions that give our public policy staff and grassroots advocates direction for Farm Bureau's position on public policy matters. For more information and resources about the policy development process, please contact your county Farm Bureau office.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

One of the major goals of Farm Bureau is to provide effective legislative representation for members at the state and national levels.

To be effective, Farm Bureau members must work with public policy staff to communicate with their state and federal legislators to familiarize them with Farm Bureau's position on legislative, regulatory and legal issues.

Through legislative district meetings, events like Ag Day at the Capital, the annual County Presidents' Trip to Washington, D.C. and regular communication (e-mail, phone, in-person, social media, and other elements in our grassroots tool box), Farm Bureau members play a critical role in supporting our professional government relations staff and advancing Farm Bureau policies through the public policy process. More information about Farm Bureau's grassroots tool box and ways for members to engage in the public policy process are included throughout this Blueprint for Grassroots Action.

Agriculture friendly candidates will help Farm Bureau protect the interests of Ohio agriculture.





POLITICAL ACTION

With the advent of term limits and the general lack of agricultural experience among legislators, it is important to elect candidates who understand and are supportive of issues that positively impact agriculture.

To achieve Farm Bureau's policy goals, members must establish relationships with their elected officials at all levels. The best way to develop these relationships is to help the officials get elected.

Through the work of the OFBF Agriculture for Good Government Political Action Committee (AGGPAC), candidate and incumbent reviews, voter registration programs, get-out-the-vote activities and candidate support committees, Farm Bureau can help elect agriculture friendly candidates who in turn will help Farm Bureau protect the interests of Ohio agriculture.

Tips for calling your elected officials office:

BE PREPARED: Think, or even practice, what you want to say.

TALK TO RIGHT PERSON: Remember that telephone calls may be taken by a staff member, not the legislator. When asking a legislator to vote yes or no, you can share that with the person answering the phone. If you need to say more, ask to speak with the aide who handles the issue.

IDENTIFY YOURSELF: State your name, address and indicate that you are a constituent.

BE BRIEF AND CONCISE: Tell the person answering the phone that you would like to leave a brief message, such as: "Please tell Senator/Representative (Name) that I support/oppose (House Bill ____ or Senate Bill ____)."

PROVIDE REASONS: Say why you support or oppose a bill. Ask for your legislator's position on the bill. You may also request a written response to your telephone call.

SAY THANK YOU: Thank the person answering the phone for their time. After a vote, call again and thank your legislator for their vote.

Tips for writing or e-mailing elected officials:

When responding to an OFBF public policy action alert, you can use Ohio Farm Bureau's online Legislative Action Center to look up your legislators contact information and to send them an email. Go to farmvotesmatter.org.

- Write your email or letter as an individual, not as a Farm Bureau representative. Legislators want to hear from "real constituents," not organization officials.
- Email or write your letter as soon as possible. Legislation can move quickly and legislators need to hear from you **BEFORE** they vote.
- Keep your email or letter brief and to the point. An email that is a paragraph or two is great, but letters should be no more than one page.
- Stick to one or two issues and clearly identify them. A one-sentence description is fine. Give a bill number if you have one.
- Open your email or letter by clearly stating your position in the first paragraph. Follow up by giving reasons why the legislator should support your position.
- Personalize your email or letter. Let the legislator know how the legislation will affect you and the people and businesses you serve.
- Use a respectful tone in your email or letter. It's okay to disagree with the legislator, but never attack him or her personally.
- Always put your return address in the email or letter.
- Conclude your email or letter by urging the legislator to take action in support of your position and thank him or her for taking the time to consider your views.



Farm Bureau's Grassroots Tool Box

Action alerts on key votes
 Capitol or district office meetings
 E-mails to elected officials
 Farm forums/on-farm policy roundtable meetings
 Farm tours for elected officials
 Key contacts program
 Legislative district meetings
 Letters to the editor
 Members testifying before House/Senate committees
 Filing public comments on rules
 Personal letters or faxes to elected officials
 Petition signature drives
 Phone calls to elected officials
 Postcards to elected officials
 Rallies or special events
 Social media contact with elected officials
 Surveys to illustrate potential impact of issues on farmers
 Tele-town halls

Political involvement opportunities

COUNTY FARM BUREAUS:

- County Farm Bureau boards of trustees are asked to complete informal incumbent review evaluation forms on incumbents and participate in open seat screenings in legislative districts where an incumbent is not running for re-election.
- County Farm Bureau leaders can host candidates for an hour or two during the county fair – use this as an opportunity to walk the candidate around the barns and introduce them to the agricultural community, talk about issues important to your county and Ohio agriculture as well as show off the 4-H/FFA youth programs.
- Host a “Meet the Candidates” reception in conjunction with your county Farm Bureau annual meeting.
- Work with local Chambers of Commerce, League of Women Voters, Rotary/Kiwanis clubs, and/or other organizations to host a candidate forum. Be sure to publicize this event well and build a large attendance.
- Conduct a voter registration drive within your county Farm Bureau membership and your community.



YOU AS AN INDIVIDUAL (NOT ON ‘FARM BUREAU TIME’):

- Research your local and statewide candidates – get to know their background, policy positions and philosophies on issues. Visit their campaign website, attend events where they speak and read about them in the newspaper; make an educated choice about who to support.
- Winning an election often costs a great deal of money so consider donating personal funds to candidates you support, Ohio Farm Bureau's Agriculture for Good Government Political Action Committee and/or your local political party.

VOLUNTEER FOR CANDIDATES AND/OR YOUR LOCAL POLITICAL PARTY BY:

- Making phone calls to candidate's supporters or potential supporters.
- Going door-to-door for a candidate to distribute literature and meet voters.
- Assist the candidate with 72-hour or Get Out the Vote (GOTV) programs.
- Walk in parades with candidates or attend local events where they are speaking or work a shift at campaign headquarters.
- Help distribute yard signs and pick them up after the election.
- Create a farmer support committee to advise the candidate on agricultural issues and to reach out to other farmers in the county.
- Host a house party or farm tour for a candidate or issue that you support — invite your friends, family and neighbors to come get to know the candidate or learn more about an issue and are supportive of issues that positively impact agriculture.



County Farm Bureau Action Team leader responsibilities

PUBLIC POLICY

Coordinate with vice president to:

- Lead/co-lead the local Farm Bureau public policy action team.
 - Recruit and provide direction to action team volunteers to assist in the execution of county Farm Bureau core funding programs and activities.
 - Develop a program of work to deal with policy and local food and animal issues. This program of work should consider Farm Bureau goals, focus on policy and issue advancement and the development of strategic relationships with local groups, organizations, stakeholders and government officials at all levels.
- Educate members on relevant topics, and encourage them to express thoughts, concerns and direction for the organization.
 - Educate and advocate for acceptable food and agricultural practices.
 - Identify and prioritize policy and food and animal issues important to your community.
 - Collaborate with other action teams to support effective public policy and public relations, while promoting membership.
 - Encourage healthy policy and issue discussion and debate with a balanced viewpoint of agriculture.

**Learn more about farm friendly candidates
and ways to get involved at farmvotesmatter.org**

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