



MEMORANDUM

To: County Farm Bureau Candidate Evaluation Committee Chairs
County Farm Bureau Presidents

CC: County Farm Bureau Communication Committee Chairs, MFB Board of Directors, MFB AgriPac Committee, MFB Regional Representatives

From: AgriPac Secretary Sarah Black, MFB Land Stewardship & Election Specialist Matt Kapp and Media Relations Manager Jill Corrin

Date: July 9, 2010

Re: Request for letters to the editor supporting AgriPac candidates in the Primary Election

The next phase in the AgriPac endorsement process is helping Friends of Agriculture get *elected* as prioritized by Michigan Farm Bureau's (MFB) government streamlining efforts. You can help your local Friends of Agriculture in the Aug. 3 primary election by submitting a letter to the editor supporting their candidacy to your local newspaper.

Election letters remain popular among newspaper readers, and undecided voters may be swayed if one candidate has a significant amount of letter-writing support over another.

What to do and keep in mind:

- Newspapers frown on form letters so personalized letters have the best chance of being published. However, we understand that letter writing can be difficult for some, so we are providing a few fill-in-the-blank templates that incorporate talking points from MFB's Common Sense Solutions to Fix Michigan initiative and Farmers CARE campaign.
 - You can submit these templates as your own, either as an individual farmer or on behalf of your county Farm Bureau; edit them to provide a personal touch; or use them as inspiration to write a one-of-a-kind letter.
- We've also provided some tips for collecting your individual thoughts on paper and some suggestions for writing letters specific to incumbents and Farm Bureau members.
- There is the potential for daily newspapers covering multiple counties to suspect a form letter campaign if more than one person submits the templates provided in their entirety. This is another incentive to write in your own voice! You might also want to consider reserving the templates for the county Farm Bureau in a newspaper's home county, i.e. the Muskegon County Farm Bureau would submit the template to the Muskegon Chronicle.

- Most newspapers accept letters that are between 150 and 250 words. Please consult your local newspaper's opinion page or Web site for the word limit.
- Newspaper opinion pages generally include instructions on how to submit letters. Most newspapers also have online submission forms on their Web site.
- There is generally a lag between the time a letter is submitted and it's published, especially during the election season. You can increase the odds of your letter being published by submitting it as soon as possible.
- You can find the list of candidates endorsed by AgriPac for the Aug. 3 primary election on MFB's Web site, www.michfb.com/elections/endorsements.
- For questions or assistance, contact MFB Media Relations Manager Jill Corrin at (800) 292-2680, ext. 6585.

Letter to the editor templates and writing tips follow.

You can also download this document from MFB's Web site.

It's part of the committee resources found on the Candidate Evaluation Committees page at www.michfb.com/elections/candidate_evaluation_committees.

Letter Templates for Michigan House/Senate Races

❖ From an individual member

As a farmer, I care about Michigan's future. I work in a land-based industry that doesn't have the luxury of packing up and moving out of state when the going gets tough. I'm here for the long haul.

[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME] understands my place and agriculture's role in Michigan's future. That's why I'm supporting **[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME]** in the primary election to serve in the **[CHOOSE ONE - Michigan Senate or Michigan House of Representatives]** representing District **[DISTRICT NUMBER.]**

[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME] is endorsed by Michigan Farm Bureau's AgriPac committee as a Friend of Agriculture, meaning **[SELECT - he or she]** understands the opportunities and challenges facing our state's agriculture industry and how farming and the Michigan Department of Agriculture impact and benefit all Michigan citizens.

[CANDIDATE'S FIRST NAME] is also committed to reforming state government and fixing Michigan's budget problems. We need leaders like **[CANDIDATE'S FIRST NAME]** who can help control state spending and find efficiencies in state government that do not put essential programs and services in jeopardy.

If you also care about Michigan's future, you should vote for **[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME]** on Aug. 3.

NAME

CITY

PHONE NUMBER (To verify authorship)

-OR-

❖ On behalf of a county Farm Bureau

Members of the **[COUNTY FARM BUREAU NAME]** care about Michigan's future. As farmers, we work in a land-based industry where we do not have the luxury of packing up and moving out of state when the going gets tough. We're here for the long haul.

[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME] understands our place and agriculture's role in Michigan's future. That's why the **[COUNTY FARM BUREAU NAME]** supports **[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME]** in the primary election to serve in the **[CHOOSE ONE - Michigan Senate or Michigan House of Representatives]** representing District **[DISTRICT NUMBER.]**

[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME] is endorsed by Michigan Farm Bureau's AgriPac committee as a Friend of Agriculture, meaning **[SELECT - he or she]** understands the opportunities and challenges facing our state's agriculture industry and how farming and the Michigan Department of Agriculture impact and benefit all Michigan citizens.

[CANDIDATE'S FIRST NAME] is also committed to reforming state government and fixing Michigan's budget problems. We need leaders like **[CANDIDATE'S FIRST NAME]** who can help control state spending and find efficiencies in state government that do not put essential programs and services in jeopardy.

If you also care about Michigan's future, you should vote for **[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME]** on Aug. 3.

NAME

CITY

COUNTY FARM BUREAU & TITLE

PHONE NUMBER (To verify authorship)

Letter to the Editor Templates for Congressional Races

❖ From an individual member

Independent business owners and entrepreneurs built this country. As a farmer, I'm proud to carry on this tradition.

But I worry that decisions made by Congress could severely impact my business and my ability to contribute to Michigan's economy. That's why I support **[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME]** in the race for District **[DISTRICT NUMBER]** U.S. Representative.

[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME] is endorsed by Michigan Farm Bureau's AgriPac committee as a Friend of Agriculture, meaning **[SELECT - he or she]** understands the opportunities and challenges facing agriculture and how decisions made in Washington, D.C. affect Michigan's agriculture industry and our nation's ability to provide Americans with safe, wholesome and affordable food.

Now more than ever we need leaders like **[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME]** who are committed to finding a balance between our country's economic, social and environmental needs.

I care about our state and country's future and I trust **[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME]** to make the right decisions. **[SELECT - he or she]** deserves your vote on Aug. 3.

NAME

CITY

PHONE NUMBER (To verify authorship)

-OR-

❖ On behalf of a county Farm Bureau

Independent business owners and entrepreneurs built this country. The farmers who are members of the **[COUNTY FARM BUREAU NAME]** are proud to carry on this tradition.

But we're concerned that decisions made by Congress could severely impact our industry and agriculture's ability to contribute to Michigan's economy. That's why we support **[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME]** in the race for District **[DISTRICT NUMBER]** U.S. Representative.

[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME] is endorsed by Michigan Farm Bureau's AgriPac committee as a Friend of Agriculture, meaning **[SELECT - he or she]** understands the opportunities and challenges facing agriculture and how decisions made in Washington, D.C. affect Michigan's agriculture industry and our nation's ability to provide Americans with safe, wholesome and affordable food.

Now more than ever we need leaders like **[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME]** who are committed to finding a balance between our country's economic, social and environmental needs.

The **[COUNTY FARM BUREAU NAME]** cares about our state and country's future and we trust **[CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME]** to make the right decisions. **[SELECT - he or she]** deserves your vote on Aug. 3.

NAME

COUNTY FARM BUREAU/TITLE

CITY

PHONE NUMBER (To verify authorship)

Tips & suggestions for personalization

❖ **General for any candidate**

- Speak to the candidate's character.
 - Is the candidate trustworthy, reliable, etc.?
- Emphasize the candidate's positive attributes and strengths.
 - Is the candidate qualified, diplomatic, etc.?
- Describe your positive experiences with the candidate in personal, business or volunteer settings. Elaborate with a few specific examples.
 - Were you impressed by the candidate during the AgriPac interview process?
 - Have you served with the candidate on a local committee or board?
 - Do you do business with the candidate?
 - Do you know the candidate from your community involvement with the local school, church, etc.?
- Where do you stand with the candidate politically?
 - Do you agree with the candidate's political platform, philosophies and strategies?

❖ **For Incumbents**

- Describe your positive experiences with the candidate in his or her current legislative office. Elaborate with a few specific examples.
 - Did the candidate introduce or help pass a significant piece of legislation affecting you, your farm or the greater agriculture industry?
 - Does the candidate attend local functions and/or meet with constituents one-on-one?
 - Is the candidate accessible? Does he or she take your phone calls? Call you back? Respond to e-mail?
 - Is the candidate a good listener? A good communicator?
 - In general, how receptive or supportive has the candidate been to your county Farm Bureau? To MFB member-developed policy?

❖ **For Farm Bureau members**

- Speak to the candidate's character, emphasizing Farmers CARE language and themes.
 - Does the candidate have the personal traits and good reputation farmers are known for? For instance, does the candidate possess:
 - A strong work ethic.
 - Personal drive.
 - A sense of community.
 - A sense of heritage.
 - Respect for tradition.
 - A love for family.
- Describe your positive experiences with the candidate in agricultural or Farm Bureau settings. Elaborate with a few specific examples.
 - Have you served with the candidate on a committee or board of the Farm Bureau or another agricultural organization?
 - Is the candidate an effective leader? How did the candidate contribute to or help influence the outcome of a specific issue, project or activity?
 - Has the candidate earned the respect of industry peers? Why?