

Policy Discussion Schedule

Wednesday Morning Delegate Session

(N 1) U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR REFORM

1 Nationwide, the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL)
2 has ~~hired an additional 250~~ significantly increased the
3 number of enforcement agents. The result has been a
4 sharp increase in the number of farms targeted for
5 USDOL enforcement action. Little or no notification was
6 given to farm operations prior to USDOL entering the
7 farm premises, or regarding the length of time required
8 to complete their examination.

9 As a result, USDOL agents ~~were~~ have been at the
10 individual farms for up to three weeks looking for
11 regulatory violations. In addition, USDOL agents:

- 12 • Disregarded established food safety and security
13 protocol;
- 14 • Stopped packing lines and field work during hours
15 of operation;
- 16 • Harassed employees with night-time and early
17 morning visits;
- 18 • Set fines based on the farm income from the
19 previous three years; and
- 20 • Entered employee living quarters when the
21 occupants were absent.

22 We support that once an agricultural labor camp is
23 inspected and licensed by the appropriate state agency
24 and then occupied, the USDOL and/or other agencies
25 may not enter the camp dwellings, which are the
26 homes of the employees, without the employee's
27 permission and proper advance notification to the
28 owner of the farm.

29 We recommend the American Farm Bureau
30 Federation (AFBF) work with state Farm Bureaus to
31 document the actions of USDOL. Once compiled,
32 AFBF, along with the state Farm Bureaus, should work
33 toward necessary reforms within USDOL. We support:

- 34 • A fine structure being made available to growers
35 based on the published regulations.
- 36 • Each fine being listed individually with a description
37 on the citation referencing the applicable regulation.
- 38 • Growers who pass yearly state licensing
39 requirements for migrant labor housing being given
40 the opportunity to correct any USDOL housing
41 violations within a reasonable time (minimum 7
42 business days) before fines are assessed.

43 Farm Bureau opposes all efforts to restrict the
44 ability of young workers to obtain appropriate
45 employment in agriculture if they desire to work.

46 The Fair Labor Standards Act should be amended
47 so that “parent” is replaced with “family” to provide an
48 exemption regardless of business structure.

(N 2) Agricultural Guestworker Program

1 Immigration issues and border security should be
2 handled on the federal and not state level. Agriculture is
3 a diverse industry, requiring specialized/skilled labor not
4 sufficiently available domestically for employment by
5 agricultural enterprises. We support a regulated, legal
6 workforce for agriculture which provides a sufficient and
7 predictable employee supply. We recommend the
8 Department of Homeland Security give farming
9 appropriate credit for being a significant economic activity
10 for immigration purposes.

11 Our continuing efforts with agricultural immigration
12 policy should be broad in scope to satisfy the diversity of
13 the agricultural economy and be able to interlock within
14 the framework of an agricultural guestworker program,
15 including the following points:

- 16 • Agriculture’s unique needs, which may change
17 suddenly with weather, global market realities,
18 contract enforceability or other variables beyond
19 the grower’s control.
- 20 • Streamline the temporary guestworker program to
21 be one that:
 - 22 ▪ Deals with minimal regulatory agencies (one if
23 possible)
 - 24 ▪ Incorporates a reasonable, uniform fee
25 structure
 - 26 ▪ Takes limited paperwork without attorneys
 - 27 ▪ Provides legal workers in a time-frame needed
28 by growers/producers
 - 29 ▪ Expands certification determination with the
30 Department of Labor to a minimum of 60
31 calendar days to ensure employers adequate
32 time to bring workers to the job site.
 - 33 ▪ Reduces domestic recruitment costs.
 - 34 ▪ Creates a simple guest worker program in which
35 a portable work permit, via the internet, could be
36 viewed and tracked as workers are employed
37 across the country.
- 38 • An opportunity for farm workers currently working,
39 but not authorized to work in the United States, to
40 earn an adjustment to temporary status if they fulfill
41 appropriate prospective work requirements in
42 agriculture.

CONTINUED ...including the following points:

- 43 • Enable agricultural employers to retain their
44 experienced workforce while transitioning into a
45 workable temporary worker program.
- 46 • Enable agricultural employers to use 514 Rural
47 Development housing for legal farm guest workers.
- 48 • The establishment of an economical and effective
49 guest worker program that will allow temporary
50 foreign workers with appropriate identification to
51 work in the United States.
- 52 • The standards of wage, housing and working
53 conditions should be no different than for other farm
54 employees in the same occupation and region.
- 55 • Simplification and replacement of the present
56 employer document system with secure fraud-proof
57 identification documents. Employer's liability for
58 foreign workers should be limited to legal obligations
59 for a domestic workforce to the extent possible.
- 60 • Repeal of the employer sanctions clause. Growers
61 should not be held liable for determining the legal or
62 illegal status of employees. We oppose any
63 mandate on employers to use E-Verify.
- 64 • Legislation to prevent workers found to be illegal
65 from continuing to occupy grower's housing unless
66 provided with immediate work authorization.
- 67 • Meaningful mediation be required prior to the Legal
68 Service Corporation, or any legal entity, bringing a
69 civil action on behalf of any employee, involving an
70 alleged employer labor violation. The suit should be
71 filed and heard in the jurisdiction the alleged
72 violation occurred.
- 73 • Increased presence and cooperation of all branches
74 of law enforcement on both sides of our
75 international borders in order to decrease
76 smuggling, drug trafficking and illegal crossings.
- 77 • We oppose limiting the number of temporary
78 worker visas, or guaranteeing payment of any
79 fraction of a worker's pay for work that has not
80 been performed.
- 81 • Providing the option of a housing allowance, in lieu
82 of housing, under certain circumstances.
- 83 • Providing workers with a visa that lasts at least
84 three years and is renewable multiple times.

85 We support broad-based immigration reform if it:

- 86 • Protects our national security interests.
- 87 • Matches willing worker with willing employer with no
88 limit or quota on the number of guest workers.
- 89 • Issues a temporary worker card that will allow the
90 participant to travel back and forth between their
91 home and the United States.
- 92 • Provides incentive for return to home country after

- 93 • period of work has ended.
94 • Provides legal status for a specified length of time,
95 and is renewable.

96 We will support efforts to reform the H-2A
97 guestworker program for employment of agricultural
98 guestworkers in the United States, either through a
99 change in government regulations or through
100 Congressional action to amend the act.

Thursday Morning Delegate Session

(N 3) NATIONAL DAIRY PROGRAM

1 We support a market orientated national dairy
2 program which is consistent with a worldwide fair and
3 open trade policy.

4 We support:

- 5 • A safety net provision for the dairy industry such as
6 a margin protection program ~~or counter cyclical~~
7 ~~payment.~~
8 • Elimination of the MILC Program.
9 • Removal of the current Dairy Price Support
10 program.
11 • Utilizing current dairy program funding for an
12 enhancement of the Livestock Gross Margin
13 Program so that it is more appropriately funded
14 and available to all producers; or the development
15 of a margin protection program.
16 • Changes to the Federal Milk Marketing Order and
17 dairy futures pricing system that allow for a more
18 timely and accurate determination of milk prices.
19 We are concerned over current utilization and
20 inaccuracies of dairy futures trading on the
21 Chicago Mercantile Exchange and delays in class
22 pricing.
23 • ~~Exempting milk from EPA Spill Prevention Control~~
24 ~~and Countermeasure (SPCC) requirements.~~
25 • The research of the EB-5 program in regard to its
26 economic benefits or harm to Michigan agriculture,
27 particularly the dairy industry.
28 • ~~A third-party review and recommendation on the~~
29 ~~continuation of the Cooperatives Working Together~~
30 ~~(CWT) program.~~
31 • The continued use of dairy futures.
32 • Inclusion of milk processors in the automatic trust
33 provisions of the Packers and Stockyard Act.
34 • An increase in current minimum standards for milk
35 similar to the higher California standards.
36 • Lowering the legal somatic cell count from 750,000
37 to ~~500,000~~ 400,000.

CONTINUED We support:

- 38 • All dairy producers enrolling in the Milk and Dairy
39 Beef Quality Assurance Program and participating
40 in the National Dairy FARM (Farmers Assuring
41 Responsible Management) Program.
- 42 • Regulations which provide for and require the
43 inspection of all imported dairy products at the
44 port/point of entry.
- 45 • The collection of promotion fees on imported dairy
46 products at the same rate as collected from U.S.
47 dairy producers. We believe all U.S. dairy
48 producers should be included in the promotion
49 assessment fees.
- 50 • USDA moving more aggressively to collect the fees
51 on imported milk products, which ultimately benefit
52 all U.S. dairymen by enhancing promotional funds.
- 53 • Imports of dairy cattle and products be prohibited
54 from any nation which USDA has not determined to
55 be free of infectious and/or contagious diseases
56 that do not meet import requirements.
- 57 • The “Real” seal only be used on dairy products that
58 are of 100% U.S. origin.
- 59 • An increase in the amount required to bond a
60 packer and/or stockyard to cover the producer’s
61 equity. The bonding requirement should be
62 reviewed annually and adjusted to reflect maximum
63 financial exposure to producers.
- 64 • The addition of dairy cattle as named in the
65 Packers and Stockyards Act.

66 We oppose:

- 67 • Any type of supply management program.
- 68 • ~~A mandatory quota program.~~
- 69 • The creation of a mandatory fund financed by a
70 check-off on dairy farmers to guarantee milk
71 checks.
- 72 • Changes in the ice cream standards that could
73 affect the safety and quality of our ice cream in the
74 United States.

75 Export markets are vital to the future well-being of
76 the dairy industry. We will work to assure:

- 77 • Full funding and utilization of the Dairy Export
78 Incentive Program.
- 79 • Producer funding for World Trade Organization
80 (WTO) legal export development.
- 81 • Any changes needed to facilitate the long-term
82 market development of value-added products.

83 We believe that MPC, casein and ultra-filtered milk
84 being imported into this country are true dairy products
85 and should be classified as such. We urge the Food and
86 Drug Administration to enforce standards of identity for
87 dairy products. We oppose the importation of MPCs,

88 casein, and ultra-filtered milk that are not subject to the
89 same tariff rate quota as other dairy products. We
90 oppose the use of any imported milk derivative such as
91 casein, milk protein concentrate (MPC) or non-dairy
92 product in any dairy product with a U.S. standard of
93 identity.

94 ~~We urge Congress, the USDA and trade negotiators~~
95 ~~to oppose the European Union Concept of cheese~~
96 ~~identity which would require the renaming of over 40~~
97 ~~cheese types produced in the U.S.~~

98 We recommend AFBF monitor the Foundation for the
99 Future program and concepts that have been proposed
100 by the National Milk Producers Federation.

(N 4) NATIONAL FARM POLICY

1 General

2 Improving net farm income, enhancing the economic
3 opportunity for farmers, preserving private property
4 rights, and conserving the environment are our most
5 important goals in the development and implementation
6 of a national farm policy.

7 We believe agriculture should not suffer
8 disproportionate cuts in federal spending.

9 The USDA and all its agencies shall use farm
10 numbers, instead of names, where financial or personal
11 information is required because of the possibility of this
12 information being made available to others through the
13 "Freedom of Information Act."

14 Farm Bureau should take a leading role in informing
15 and educating the agricultural community on the
16 changes and new programs available through the 2008
17 Farm Bill.

18 We support:

- 19 • Food safety regulations should be administered and
20 funded by USDA.
- 21 • Adequate staffing of FSA offices and encourage
22 timely distribution of program payments.
- 23 • Preservation of the local committee system to
24 oversee FSA. All committees should consist of
25 farmers selected by local farmers.
- 26 • Additional investments in the development of
27 renewable energy sources and additional new uses
28 for agricultural commodities.
- 29 • Program sign-up procedures and periods that
30 facilitate producer participation.
- 31 • Additional funding for rural community investment in
32 health care, telecommunications, broadband and
33 agricultural processing. However, funding priority
34 should be given to projects that positively impact
35 production agriculture.

CONTINUED We support:

- 36 • Government programs that will increase profitability
- 37 of program and non-program commodities. ~~These~~
- 38 ~~may include direct payments.~~
- 39 • Expedient delivery of program benefits.
- 40 • Statute of limitation of 5 years on any non-
- 41 compliance issue and limiting USDA penalty
- 42 collection to the beginning of the non-compliance or
- 43 a maximum of 5 years, whichever is less.

44 We oppose:

- 45 • Payment limitations.
- 46 • Mandatory idling of land or set-aside.
- 47 • Government production controls.
- 48 • Means testing.
- 49 • Farm program payments to non U.S. citizens.

50 **Commodities**

51 ~~We support:~~

52 **[Relocated from within this policy]** We support

53 preservation and enhancement of the risk management

54 safety net function of the Farm Bill to encourage

55 producer participation through the following changes:

- 56 • Limited Liability Corporations (LLC) being treated
- 57 as partnerships in the administration of farm
- 58 programs.
- 59 • The ability to sign up leased (including cash
- 60 rented) land without long-term agreements. This
- 61 land should receive payments only as long as the
- 62 contract is continued.
- 63 • Transitioning away from direct payments.
- 64 • ~~Increased Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC)~~
- 65 ~~commodity loan rates to more accurately reflect~~
- 66 ~~current cost of production.~~

67 **[Relocated within this policy]** ~~We support~~

68 ~~preservation and enhancement of the risk management~~

69 ~~safety net function of the Farm Bill by improving the~~

70 ~~ACRE program to encourage producer participation~~

71 ~~through the following changes:~~

- 72 • Eliminate the Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP)
- 73 Program.
- 74 • Increase Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC)
- 75 commodity loan rates to more accurately reflect
- 76 current cost of production.
- 77 • Increase the current ACRE farm payment cap of
- 78 25% of state ACRE guarantee.
- 79 • Eliminate the 30% CCC loan rate penalty for ACRE
- 80 participation.
- 81 • Replace the state benchmark yield with a county-
- 82 level or regional in-state benchmark yield. This will
- 83 avoid high yields in one part of the state to abort

CONTINUED We support...through the following changes:

- 84 possible ACRE payments to producers in areas of
85 the state with weather-related low yields.
- 86 • Simplify language and clarify terminology on FSA
87 forms to increase landowner
88 acceptance/participation.
 - 89 • Simplify proven yield process under one program.
 - 90 • Explore opportunities to harmonize methods of
91 property descriptions between FSA, Crop
92 Insurance and Risk Management Agency to
93 streamline information sharing between the two
94 agencies and to develop a common method to
95 establish crop yields for the various programs.

96 **Specialty Crops**

97 We support:

- 98 • The definition of specialty crops should include, but
99 not be limited to, fruit, vegetables, ornamentals,
100 nuts or non-program crops grown for consumption
101 and/or sales.
- 102 • Foreign guest workers being allowed to reside in
103 Section 514 and Section 516 housing of the
104 Housing Act of 1949.
- 105 • The continuation and possible expansion of such
106 programs as Project Fresh.
- 107 • If the fruit and vegetable planting restriction is
108 eliminated, then green box compliant direct
109 compensation should be made to historic fruit and
110 vegetable growers.
- 111 • Extension of the Fruit and Vegetable Transferability
112 Program.

113 We do not support indirect compensation to the
114 specialty crop industry as compensation for the loss of
115 the prohibition, and feel the industry/farmers would not
116 be well served by indirect payments.

117 Additional policy options to support the specialty crop
118 industry should be handled separately from the debate
119 over compensation for the loss of the prohibition. We
120 support enhanced spending to support the specialty
121 crop industry through the following prioritized funding
122 options:

- 123 • Programs to increase utilization of specialty crops
124 (such as the Pulse Health Initiative).
- 125 • Per state competitive grant program to enhance
126 grower directed research and extension programs.
- 127 • Specialty crop block grants.
- 128 • Expanded crop insurance and other risk
129 management tools.
- 130 • Dedicated funding for specialty crop growers in
131 working lands programs.

- 132 • Dedicated funding to help combat regional insect or
133 disease events.
134 • Expansion of Market Loss Assistance and USDA
135 Commodity Purchases for both fresh and processed
136 products.

137 **Ag Credit/Lending**

138 We support:

- 139 • The expansion of the FSA grain facility loan
140 program to cover all commodity storage structures,
141 including hay and forages.
142 • The availability of USDA funding for producers
143 wishing to invest in new generation cooperatives
144 and other value-added opportunities.
145 • Increased caps on FSA loans to beginning farmers.
146 • The continuation of the Emergency Loan Provision
147 being made available to equine farmers and
148 ranchers.
149 • Continuation of the EQIP provisions in the 2008
150 Farm Bill and inclusion of funding for Wildlife Risk
151 Mitigation plans in the 2012 Farm Bill.

152 **Equine**

153 We support:

- 154 • The continuation of the three-year depreciation
155 schedule for race horses as currently allowed in
156 the 2008 Farm Bill. We believe the term “placed in
157 service” means when the horse begins training.
158 • The development and funding of an equine
159 program that would compensate for horse
160 slaughter laws which prohibit the sale of equine.
161 The program should be developed immediately
162 and be retroactive, and included in the 2012 Farm
163 Bill.

164 **Aquaculture**

165 We support a more expanded inclusion of
166 aquaculture in the 2012 Farm Bill, including the
167 establishment of a loan guarantee program and the
168 development of an insurance and indemnification
169 program that covers losses due to disaster, disease
170 and predator/protected specie damage.

171 **Research**

172 We support funding for competitive research grants
173 within the farm bill that will:

- 174 • Maintain unbiased perspective of university
175 research.
176 • Increase economic opportunities in farming and
177 rural communities.
178 • Expand locally-owned, value-added processing.

- 179 • Increase international competitiveness, efficiency
180 and farm profitability.
181 • Reduce economic and health risks.
182 • Conserve and enhance natural resources.
183 • Develop new crops, new crop uses, and new
184 agricultural applications of biotechnology.
185 • Enhance animal agricultural resources.
186 • Preserve plant and animal germplasm.
187 We encourage the use of the farm bill to enhance
188 funding for agricultural research.

189 **Conservation**

190 We support:

- 191 • Focusing conservation programs and dollars on soil
192 and water conservation and protection.
193 • A shift in funding from reserve type conservation
194 programs (e.g., Conservation Reserve Program
195 [CRP]) to working lands conservation programs.
196 However, we oppose relief from CRP contracts that
197 have not yet expired, and recommend that current
198 contracts continue as written.
199 • Changes in Conservation Stewardship Program
200 (CSP) and future working lands conservation
201 programs to include farmers who are practicing
202 good environmental stewardship on the land they
203 cash rent. Eligibility for the programs could be
204 shown by the producer proving compliance with the
205 requirements at the beginning of the enrollment and
206 annually.
207 • Funding for the Natural Resources Conservation
208 Service (NRCS) and FSA cost-share programs.
209 These cost-share programs should be based on the
210 implementation cost to the farmer and the benefits
211 to the environment. The cost-share programs
212 should not be capped by farm size or animal units.
213 • Local control and site specific mowing schedules to
214 control noxious weeds prior to maturity and to
215 enhance wildlife habitat on CRP and Conservation
216 Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) enrolled
217 land.
218 • Consideration of lowering the threshold for release
219 of CRP ground for haying and grazing in the event
220 of a disaster.
221 • Expanding the current Michigan NRCS practice of
222 providing 30% of conservation practice payments
223 up front, to all farmers.
224 • Making changes to the accepted management
225 practices that are allowed on filter strips or CREP.
226 This would include allowing the strips to be cut and
227 harvested in a timely manner to prevent an
228 adverse effect to run-off waters.

229 Set-aside or reserve type conservation programs
230 should target the most highly environmentally sensitive
231 areas. Conservation programs should be voluntary,
232 provide compensation for lost acreage or production,
233 and be implemented in a manner to achieve adequate
234 program participation while minimizing the undue loss of
235 productive farmland causing artificial inflation of local
236 farmland/rental values and reduction of economic
237 activity.

238 NRCS should offer technical support on voluntary
239 programs to address environmental concerns. We
240 support the following policy direction for NRCS:

- 241 • Serve as a link between research and production
242 agriculture.
- 243 • Offer voluntary approaches with financial
244 incentives to address resource concerns.

245 When the Chief of USDA-NRCS hires the NRCS
246 State Conservationist, consideration should be given to
247 technical knowledge, agricultural background, and
248 understanding of agricultural issues.

249 We oppose the following changes to the USDA Farm
250 and Ranchland Protection program:

- 251 • Limiting the amount of impervious surface of a farm
252 eligible for protection after the development rights
253 are purchased on farmland.
- 254 • Requiring a farmstead complex to show future
255 building locations.
- 256 • Prohibiting splits of 40 acres or more of farmland
257 after development rights are purchased.
258 Prohibiting the exploration and extraction of oil and
259 gas from purchase of development rights secured
260 land.
- 261 • Prohibiting the installation of commercial windmills.

262 **Crop Insurance**

263 We support a crop insurance/risk management
264 program that:

- 265 • is maintained in the private sector.
- 266 • provides subsidy support focused on maintaining
267 farmer premium affordability.
- 268 • allows all commodities to be eligible with coverage
269 at comparable levels for all commodity sectors.
- 270 • is simplified and consistent acreage reporting in
271 one location.
- 272 • provides timely service and payment of benefits.

273 We oppose the concept of a “shallow loss” protection
274 program.

275 **Crop Insurance / Disaster Assistance**

276 Until crop insurance is made cost-effective and
277 available to all commodities, we support ~~timely delivery~~

278 of disaster assistance for weather-related losses.
279 Payment for losses should occur within one year of the
280 disaster. The new SURE Disaster Program needs
281 modifications in order to provide timely benefit
282 payments to farms experiencing crop disasters. The
283 current time schedule of 1½ to 2 years for benefits to
284 be distributed is way too long for farms suffering crop
285 disasters.

286 Although the purchase of crop insurance is
287 voluntary, many farmers are awarded a farmer should
288 not be eligible for disaster assistance without
289 purchasing a form of crop insurance/NAP. Therefore,
290 disaster assistance given to an uninsured farmer
291 should be reduced by the amount of crop insurance
292 premium that would have been charged for the acres
293 covered. Purchase of insurance for the next two years
294 should be required. We also support amendments to
295 USDA disaster loan provisions that would provide
296 government interest rate subsidies through commercial
297 lenders to lower interest costs to producers on existing
298 indebtedness.

299 **WTO/Trade**

300 If changes are necessary in the farm bill due to
301 World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements,
302 consideration should be given to the following:

- 303 • National farm policy should:
 - 304 ▪ Secure the food supply.
 - 305 ▪ Strive for reduced complexity while allowing
 - 306 producers increased flexibility to plant in
 - 307 response to market demand.
 - 308 ▪ Maintain a farm income safety net while
 - 309 encouraging efficiency,
 - 310 ▪ Be driven by the needs of production agriculture.
 - 311 ▪ Maintain profitable farm income levels.
 - 312 ▪ Establish programs and incentives to make
 - 313 agriculture a viable career option for young
 - 314 Americans.
 - 315 ▪ Expand exports.
 - 316 ▪ Be compliant with WTO agreements.
- 317 • We would agree to reductions in trade distorting
318 supports (amber box) in exchange for an
319 economically proportionate increase in agricultural
320 market access and reductions in export subsidies.
321 Such reductions in U.S. amber box supports should
322 be offset by a transfer to fully funded non-trade
323 distorting (green box) eligible programs. This could
324 be accomplished through:
 - 325 ▪ Working lands conservation programs that
 - 326 accommodate the needs of production
 - 327 agriculture.

- 328 ▪ ~~Shifting toward greater reliance on direct~~
- 329 ~~payments.~~
- 330 ▪ Risk management.
- 331 ▪ Market Access Program.
- 332 ▪ Enhanced crop insurance.
- 333 ▪ Gross revenue insurance.

334 ***Nutrition***

335 We support:

- 336 • Requiring college students who are recipients of
 - 337 bridge cards to provide FAFSA completed forms to
 - 338 show financial need of assistance.
 - 339 • Elimination of bridge cards/food assistance for full-
 - 340 time college students who have school meal plans,
 - 341 with no dependents.
 - 342 • Requiring drug testing to qualify for participation in
 - 343 any public food assistance program.
 - 344 • Increased verification of employment and wages.
 - 345 • Increased verification of identity of recipients.
 - 346 • Efforts to expand the purchases of fruits and
 - 347 vegetables under the Supplemental Nutrition
 - 348 Assistance Program.
 - 349 • Elimination of carbonated beverages from food
 - 350 available in/under assistance programs and other
 - 351 beverages with bottle deposits.
-

Thursday Afternoon Delegate Session

(S 1) INTERNATIONAL TRADE CROSSING

1 Canada is Michigan's leading trade partner and
2 transportation to and from Canada is vital to
3 accommodate the agricultural industry. Therefore, we
4 support the new proposed bridge across the Detroit
5 River as it is vitally important to agriculture for several
6 reasons:

- 7 • The age of the current Ambassador Bridge has
- 8 created concerns about the long-term viability of
- 9 our most important trade crossing.
- 10 • The bridge would be designed with an interstate-to-
- 11 interstate connection, without a maze of city traffic
- 12 or stop lights.
- 13 • The cost to Michigan tax payers is minimal. The
- 14 Canadian government has agreed to fund the
- 15 project (\$550 million). Canada will get its
- 16 investment back via tolls. No obligation exists to
- 17 repay through tax dollars.
- 18 • This approach allows Michigan to use the money
- 19 as collateral to leverage about \$2.2 billion from the

20 federal government in U.S. road funds which can
21 be used on state roadways.

- 22 • The project will create jobs in construction and for
23 the operations and supporting infrastructure use.

24 The proposed New International Trade Crossing
25 (NITC) would be administered by a governor-appointed
26 Bridge Authority that would negotiate building contracts
27 through an open bid process, regulate operations and
28 set crossing toll rates. The Canadian government has
29 committed to cover Michigan's cost for construction of
30 the new crossing and has further agreed to cover any
31 future short falls in the projected revenue at no cost to
32 Michigan taxpayers.

33 Further, the NITC promises to be more efficient with
34 easier access from highways and shorter delays from
35 international custom inspectors.

(S 2) GAME FARMS AND HUNTING PRESERVES

1 Michigan game breeders and hunting preserve
2 operations that breed, feed, and graze privately-owned
3 animals are an integral part of the agricultural economy
4 of the State. ~~The industry provides food and maintains~~
5 ~~good year-round habitat for wildlife, sometimes helping~~
6 ~~to reduce pressure on adjacent farm production crops.~~
7 ~~Hunting preserves provide access for the non-farm~~
8 ~~population by providing a safe opportunity to harvest~~
9 ~~animals.~~ The industry is concerned about the increased
10 ~~local~~ government restrictions on the use of farms for the
11 purpose of hunting.

12 We support legislation that provides opportunities
13 and protection for this growing segment of Michigan's
14 diverse agriculture.

15 We support the elimination of feral swine. ~~in the wild~~
16 ~~and a moratorium on new swine game farms until new~~
17 ~~rules are developed and implemented.~~

18 On October 8, 2011, an invasive species order went
19 into effect naming certain species of pigs as invasive.
20 Regardless of the outcome of the pending court case
21 challenging the order, we support continued
22 development and implementation of regulations on
23 hunting facilities that allow swine hunting. These rules
24 would include, but not be limited to:

- 25 • Disease testing for all incoming and outgoing
26 animals.
- 27 • Strict fencing requirements to limit the potential of
28 recreationally hunted swine transitioning into the
29 wild.
- 30 • Following all standard and accepted practices for
31 swine meat production operations in regard to
32 interstate and international animal movement.

- 33 • Hunting swine population shall consist of sterile
34 animals only.
- 35 • Permanent individual animal identification on all
36 animals used for breeding and stocking of swine in
37 hunting facilities.
- 38 • Record keeping of all incoming and outgoing
39 animals.

40 ~~We support the development and implementation of~~
41 ~~management practices and rules for swine hunting~~
42 ~~operations. These rules should include disease testing~~
43 ~~for incoming and outgoing animals, fencing~~
44 ~~requirements and record keeping methods. Animals~~
45 ~~imported from another state or country must have~~
46 ~~appropriate state or federal health certificates.~~
47 ~~Additionally, swine hunting facilities shall only be~~
48 ~~populated with sterile animals or have permanent,~~
49 ~~individual animal identification. All farms providing~~
50 ~~animals to swine hunting facilities must have~~
51 ~~permanent, individual animal identification on all swine~~
52 ~~before reaching 50 pounds, and prior to leaving the~~
53 ~~premise.~~

54 ~~Until these rules are implemented, we demand a~~
55 ~~quarantine be placed upon all swine hunting operations.~~
56 ~~All hunting operations must register their premise. We~~
57 ~~urge these rules be developed and implemented as~~
58 ~~soon as possible.~~

59 ~~We support the Michigan Department of Agriculture~~
60 ~~and Michigan Department of Natural Resource's current~~
61 ~~rules and regulations governing captive cervid farms.~~

(S 3) WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

1 Wildlife is an important part of Michigan's outdoor
2 heritage and economy. Sound biological science must
3 be used to manage all wildlife populations to maintain
4 proper balance in numbers, reduce damage to
5 property, and control disease transmission. We believe
6 hunting and trapping should be protected as the
7 primary tools for wildlife management.

8 We support competitive license fees to encourage
9 resident and nonresident hunting and fishing
10 opportunities. We encourage the Department of Natural
11 Resources (DNR) to review management units for all
12 wildlife and consider reconfigurations based on
13 biogeographic areas. MFB will work with the DNR and
14 other stakeholders to achieve ecological balance and
15 not exceed carrying capacity of the land. The DNR
16 should increase habitat management on public lands,
17 helping both the hunting and farming communities.

18 The DNR should consider revising hunting seasons
19 to provide the most flexibility to hunters to improve

20 success and effectively manage populations. Further,
21 the DNR should be the lead agency to advocate
22 Michigan's authority to manage federally protected
23 species. We urge the American Farm Bureau
24 Federation to take a proactive stance on increasing
25 state's rights to manage federally protected species.

26 We support standardized procedures for reporting,
27 investigating and indemnification of depredation. A
28 notarized state of loss should be enough proof for a
29 reimbursement claim when there is no evidence
30 beyond an animal of appropriate size missing.

31 The decision to allow baiting and feeding should be
32 based on veterinary/animal health science. MFB
33 opposes artificial baiting and feeding of free-ranging
34 deer. Strengthening fines and penalties for illegal
35 feeding and baiting of wildlife, similar to those for
36 poaching, should be considered.

37 Wildlife control permits should be low cost and
38 easily accessible based on seasonal damage.
39 Controlling species on farmland is necessary to
40 produce a viable product. MFB encourages farmers to
41 consider alternative methods for controlling loss, which
42 may include lease options. If control methods are
43 ineffective, farmers should have the authority to
44 manage nuisance/destructive species on their land.

45 Increased voluntary check stations for wildlife need
46 to be explored. This could be utilized to help provide
47 better population data, control disease and
48 management of wildlife in Michigan. In cases of
49 diseased animals, replacement tags should be issued.

50 We support programs and methods that help control
51 problem species, including the concept of earn-a-buck,
52 and oppose concepts that will have adverse effects on
53 agriculture such as mandatory management practices
54 on private land.

55 ~~Wildlife is an important part of Michigan's outdoor~~
56 ~~heritage and the State's economy. However, sound~~
57 ~~biological science must be used to manage wildlife properly~~
58 ~~and to minimize property loss and the spread of disease.~~
59 ~~The current Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is~~
60 ~~offering several opportunities for Michigan citizens to~~
61 ~~provide input into wildlife management practices. We~~
62 ~~encourage Farm Bureau members to participate and take~~
63 ~~active roles as appropriate. Diseases like bovine~~
64 ~~tuberculosis (TB), Chronic Wasting Disease, and West Nile~~
65 ~~Virus, and their negative potential impacts on human~~
66 ~~health, demonstrate the urgent need to effectively manage~~
67 ~~wildlife populations. The presence of bovine TB in livestock~~
68 ~~herds results in the quarantine of those herds and, with few~~
69 ~~exceptions, depopulation. We believe the same standards~~
70 ~~for herd depopulation should apply to wildlife species within~~
71 ~~an established area. Normal agricultural practices should~~

72 ~~not be construed to be feeding and/or baiting of wildlife for~~
73 ~~law enforcement purposes.~~

74 ~~We believe hunting and trapping should be protected as~~
75 ~~an appropriate means of wildlife management. We~~
76 ~~encourage farmers to allow responsible hunters to hunt on~~
77 ~~their farms in reasonable, safe numbers. PA 733 of the~~
78 ~~Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act~~
79 ~~provides landowners with liability protection whether people~~
80 ~~entering the property have permission or not and whether~~
81 ~~the landowner charges a fee or not. This Act, along with a~~
82 ~~sample lease agreement for hunting, is available on the~~
83 ~~Michigan Farm Bureau Web site. We urge farmers to~~
84 ~~contact the DNR as soon as possible to learn about the~~
85 ~~different management tools available to landowners and~~
86 ~~implement these tools on their farms. We support minimal~~
87 ~~fee increases for general hunting licenses, but do not~~
88 ~~support fees for management tools used to address wildlife~~
89 ~~that negatively impact agriculture. We encourage farmers~~
90 ~~to contact USDA APHIS Wildlife for help controlling~~
91 ~~federally protected species, including sandhill cranes. Cost-~~
92 ~~share dollars should be available for fencing to protect feed~~
93 ~~storage in all areas where wildlife is over populated, as well~~
94 ~~as in TB areas.~~

95 Deer

96 ~~White-tailed deer continue to cause economic~~
97 ~~difficulties for Michigan farmers due to crop damage and~~
98 ~~animal health issues, and car/deer crashes represent a~~
99 ~~significant public hazard. Large-scale efforts are necessary~~
100 ~~to reduce deer populations in many areas of the State.~~

101 ~~We are encouraged that deer population levels in~~
102 ~~Northeast Michigan have been significantly reduced, and~~
103 ~~this good work must continue. The combination of liberal~~
104 ~~hunting regulations, easy permit access, and sense of~~
105 ~~urgency from the DNR, Michigan Department of Agriculture~~
106 ~~and Department of Community Health has yielded these~~
107 ~~results. We call on the DNR to implement these same~~
108 ~~strategies in areas within Deer Management Units (DMUs)~~
109 ~~that are over goal to return and maintain deer population~~
110 ~~levels to the management goal level. We encourage the~~
111 ~~DNR to review DMUs and consider reconfigurations based~~
112 ~~on biogeographic areas as has been done in the past.~~

113 ~~We support a Michigan Hunter and Farmer Partnership~~
114 ~~Initiative that will forge new levels of cooperation and~~
115 ~~communication between hunters, farmers and the DNR.~~

116 ~~Under this initiative, MFB will:~~

- 117 ~~• Make available to its members the opportunity to list~~
118 ~~their farm on an MFB database of farms willing to~~
119 ~~accept hunters.~~
- 120 ~~• Develop a list of hunters and make this list available~~
121 ~~to interested farmers.~~
- 122 ~~• Encourage farmers to implement on-farm hunting~~
123 ~~practices that result in maximizing antlerless harvest~~
124 ~~and thus reducing deer populations.~~

125 ~~The DNR will:~~

- 126 ~~• Make permits more readily available to farmers until~~
- 127 ~~deer populations reach DMU target populations.~~
- 128 ~~• Consider special hunting opportunities to accomplish~~
- 129 ~~critical population control where necessary.~~

130 ~~Within the Michigan Hunter and Farmer Partnership~~
131 ~~Initiative, the farmers retain all landowner rights of hunter~~
132 ~~selection and access and have the option to provide~~
133 ~~hunters with additional permits.~~

134 ~~MFB should continue to serve as a coordination point~~
135 ~~for conflict resolution between farmers and wildlife~~
136 ~~biologists on appropriate population reduction measures.~~

137 ~~Significant hunting activity is necessary to effectively~~
138 ~~reduce the number of deer to a level that will alleviate~~
139 ~~overpopulation concerns. We support the following~~
140 ~~measures:~~

- 141 ~~• Starting of firearm deer season on the second~~
- 142 ~~Saturday in November and to end on the 30th of~~
- 143 ~~November and in no year be less than 16 days.~~
- 144 ~~• Reduction of out-of-state deer hunting license fees to~~
- 145 ~~make Michigan a more attractive destination for non-~~
- 146 ~~resident hunters.~~
- 147 ~~• A statewide ban on feeding and baiting of free-~~
- 148 ~~ranging deer.~~
- 149 ~~• Strengthening the fines and penalties for illegal feeding~~
- 150 ~~and baiting, in the absence of a statewide feeding and~~
- 151 ~~baiting ban, to those similar for poaching violations~~
- 152 ~~(heavy fines, seizures of guns and vehicles).~~
- 153 ~~• Timely issuance of antlered and antlerless permits~~
- 154 ~~when needed.~~
- 155 ~~• No permit fees if a landowner has experienced~~
- 156 ~~damage in the current crop production year.~~
- 157 ~~• The creation of a single permit at no cost to be used~~
- 158 ~~for deer management, allowing the harvest of any sex~~
- 159 ~~that will be available throughout the year with liberal~~
- 160 ~~regulation on the number of shooters (e.g. combined~~
- 161 ~~crop damage permit, disease control permit, block~~
- 162 ~~permit, etc). Until this is implemented, we support~~
- 163 ~~continued availability of crop damage and disease~~
- 164 ~~control permits throughout the year with an expanded~~
- 165 ~~number of shooters.~~
- 166 ~~• Significant expansion or reinstatement of both early~~
- 167 ~~and late seasons where needed.~~
- 168 ~~• Any other legal technique to increase the harvest.~~
- 169 ~~• Continuation of an early hunting season for youth,~~
- 170 ~~senior citizens, and handicapped individuals.~~
- 171 ~~• Granting all farmers, family members, and farm~~
- 172 ~~employees, where crop damage occurred, the right to~~
- 173 ~~hunt deer and turkeys on their farm without license~~
- 174 ~~fees, as well as on rented or leased land (with~~
- 175 ~~permission). Farmers processing harvested deer~~
- 176 ~~should be permitted to dispose of unused parts on~~
- 177 ~~their farms by proper burial or composting.~~

- 178 • ~~Automatic issuance of block permits for new fruit tree~~
179 ~~plantings and other crop plantings, which are very~~
180 ~~susceptible to damage, during the critical early years~~
181 ~~of the planting.~~
182 • ~~Increased voluntary checks of all deer taken in~~
183 ~~Michigan.~~
184 • ~~An increased number of DNR approved check~~
185 ~~stations for added convenience.~~
186 • ~~A free replacement hunting tag for hunters who turn in~~
187 ~~a deer that is suspect for TB and confiscated.~~
188 • ~~Identity protection for landowners and/or farmers who~~
189 ~~request block and/or crop damage permits.~~

190 ~~We oppose the granting of permits for the importation of~~
191 ~~free ranging deer. We also oppose mandatory Quality Deer~~
192 ~~Management (QDM) programs which regulate the taking of~~
193 ~~deer by size of antlers. Any efforts to implement QDM (i.e.,~~
194 ~~studies and surveys) must be paid for by proposing private~~
195 ~~parties. The second buck tag in Michigan should have no~~
196 ~~antler size minimum.~~

197 ~~We urge MFB to take a proactive approach with~~
198 ~~insurance companies and the agricultural community to~~
199 ~~communicate the need to the Natural Resources~~
200 ~~Commission that the deer population needs to be~~
201 ~~significantly reduced.~~

202 ~~Feral Swine~~

203 ~~Feral swine cause a tremendous amount of damage to~~
204 ~~Michigan's natural resources and private property. MFB~~
205 ~~supports the statewide eradication of feral swine.~~

206 ~~Turkeys and Geese~~

207 ~~Turkeys and geese are increasingly becoming~~
208 ~~overpopulated in many agricultural areas and are creating~~
209 ~~extensive crop damage. We suggest the following~~
210 ~~measures be taken before turkeys/geese become~~
211 ~~unmanageable in Michigan:~~

- 212 • ~~Include turkeys and geese under the small game~~
213 ~~license program.~~
214 • ~~A continued expansion of the hunting seasons and~~
215 ~~bag limits for geese and turkeys.~~
216 • ~~Landowner permits.~~
217 • ~~A block permit program.~~
218 • ~~Out-of-season shooting permits.~~

219 ~~Sandhill Cranes~~

220 ~~The population of sandhill cranes has significantly~~
221 ~~increased in certain areas of the State. The species are~~
222 ~~very destructive to small corn and wheat seedlings~~
223 ~~requiring replanting in many cases.~~

224 ~~We request this problem be researched by the DNR~~
225 ~~and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to implement a hunting~~
226 ~~season or other appropriate means of control. This specie~~
227 ~~is hunted in other states.~~

228 ~~Wolves~~

229 ~~The administrative decision, due to recent court cases,~~
230 ~~to relist the Eastern Gray Wolf as an endangered species is~~

231 a major disappointment. We urge the U.S. Fish & Wildlife
232 Service to provide the necessary information to the federal
233 court and vigorously pursue the delisting of the Eastern
234 Gray Wolf for the Great Lakes states of Minnesota,
235 Wisconsin and Michigan. We urge American Farm Bureau
236 to take a proactive approach and assist the U.S. Fish &
237 Wildlife Service to expedite the delisting. We urge MFB to
238 continue its active role as a major stakeholder in the
239 implementation of the Gray Wolf Management Plan. Farm
240 Bureau supports the Wolf Management Roundtable
241 recommendations for indemnification programs and
242 opposes the relocation of wolves into areas where livestock
243 are present. We support standardized procedures for
244 reporting and investigating wolf concerns which would
245 culminate in a written report of investigation findings made
246 available to the producer.

247 **Other Wildlife**

248 We remain concerned about all species of wildlife that
249 are becoming increasingly destructive and may be carriers
250 of infectious diseases. Where possible, we encourage the
251 DNR to develop incentive programs (i.e., bounties) to
252 encourage the taking of these animals by the hunting public.

253 When wildlife and/or protected species become
254 destructive to private property, exceed the DNR's scientific
255 population level goals, are found to be carriers of infectious
256 disease, or exceed their habitat range, immediate proactive
257 population control tools or relocation must be initiated to
258 avoid agricultural losses or the State should be liable for
259 subsequent damage. Producers should only be required to
260 produce a notarized "statement of loss" to file a claim for
261 reimbursement when there is no evidence beyond the fact
262 that an animal of appropriate size is missing. We support
263 the concept of block permits to aid in wildlife population
264 reduction.

265 Whenever a species is introduced, relocated or expanded
266 in a new area, the State must provide compensation for
267 property damage caused by these species.

268 We encourage and support the establishment of a wildlife
269 summit in Michigan. The purpose would be to discuss the
270 balance and scope of the wildlife population in Michigan and
271 its impact on the overall economy and animal health.

272 **Legal Action**

273 If the DNR eliminates or severely restricts the new tools
274 available for landowners to control wildlife on their farm, we
275 believe the following issues may need to be resolved by
276 legal action in order to protect agricultural businesses from
277 economic losses or transmission of disease:

- 278 • Private landowners should have the legal right to
279 manage overpopulation of wildlife on their land in
280 order to avoid economic losses through destruction of
281 their crops and livestock by wildlife.
- 282 • The State of Michigan will be obligated to provide full
283 compensation and/or provide adequate fencing to

284
285
286

~~landowners who are unable to control the wildlife
engaged in the destruction of their crops and
livestock.~~

