

Recommendations on Michigan Farm Bureau Policies

(FB 1) LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

1 The Michigan Farm Bureau Legal Defense Fund is
2 designed to provide financial support in connection with
3 legal issues of common concern to Michigan agriculture
4 and, in particular, those issues where the decision will
5 be viewed as establishing an important legal precedent.

6 During the past year, 10 requests were received from
7 members seeking Legal Defense Fund assistance. The
8 Legal Defense Fund Committee reviewed and
9 supported two precedent-setting cases with grants
10 totaling **\$8,000**. We commend the members of the Legal
11 Defense Fund Advisory Committee for their efforts to
12 thoroughly review each application for funding and
13 thank them for their service.

14 Financial support for the Legal Defense Fund is
15 derived from contributions received from MFB and the
16 county Farm Bureaus. Income for the period **October 1,**
17 **2010** through September 30, **2011** totaled **\$35,556**, with
18 **\$9,482** coming from county contributions, **\$15,911** from
19 Michigan Farm Bureau, **\$10,000** from a member
20 **contribution**, and **\$163** in interest. The fund had a
21 balance of **\$243,228** on September 30, **2011**. We thank
22 all of our counties for their generous support.

23 We recommend county Farm Bureaus contribute to
24 the Legal Defense Fund a minimum of 10 cents per
25 member, based on prior year membership, and
26 encourage them to make additional discretionary
27 contributions whenever possible. Further, we
28 recommend that MFB continue to contribute up to a
29 maximum of \$20,000 annually, or an amount equal to
30 that contributed by the county Farm Bureaus.

31 A letter requesting contributions, outlining significant
32 activities supported by the fund and the present status
33 of the fund balance, should be sent to the county Farm
34 Bureaus prior to their annual budgeting process. The
35 Chief Operating Officer of MFB should annually
36 evaluate the need for contributions to the fund based on
37 the accumulated fund balance and the requests for legal
38 assistance.

(FB 2) MEMBERSHIP

1 Michigan Farm Bureau's **2011** membership of **193,814**
2 maintains our position as the largest and most prominent
3 general farm organization in Michigan. We commend the
4 efforts of our volunteer workers, insurance agents, county
5 administrative managers, staff and affiliate company
6 personnel who worked together on the **2011** membership

7 campaign. A total of **22** counties achieved membership
8 goal in **2011**, while **49** counties achieved regular member
9 target.

10 Membership growth is a necessary element in
11 maintaining the effectiveness of Farm Bureau
12 throughout Michigan and the nation. We approve the
13 **2012** membership goal of **196,305** members which
14 represents a gain of at least one member in each
15 county's year-end membership total.

16 Membership is the lifeblood of our organization. To
17 that end, we encourage all county Farm Bureaus to
18 conduct a vigorous new member campaign along with a
19 concentrated renewal effort to meet our **2012** goal. An
20 intense effort to bring new regular members and retain
21 current regular members should be the primary focus of
22 the volunteer membership drive. We encourage all
23 counties to develop and maintain an on-going, up-to-
24 date prospect list of potential regular members in their
25 county. Campaign managers should strive to involve
26 five percent of the regular members in the county
27 membership drive. We also recommend that county
28 Farm Bureaus put special emphasis to involve all county
29 program areas in their annual membership drive.

30 Our Farm Bureau Insurance agents, managers and
31 corporate staff play a major role in a successful
32 membership drive. We encourage Farm Bureau
33 Insurance management and agency managers to place
34 a high priority on assisting counties to achieve their
35 annual membership target and goal. Corporate business
36 plans for MFB and Farm Bureau Insurance should
37 identify membership growth as a state annual objective
38 and work diligently to that end.

39 Due to the importance of county Farm Bureau offices
40 and staffing, and in keeping with the original intent and
41 purpose of Farm Bureau Insurance, we feel it is important
42 for Farm Bureau Insurance to provide stable and
43 dependable office support. To provide this stability, we
44 feel that maintaining a relationship with Farm Bureau
45 Insurance at county Farm Bureau offices ~~where they~~
46 ~~exist~~ needs to be a priority versus developing new
47 service centers for insurance only, ~~needs to be a priority.~~

48 ~~We recommend the MFB Board of Directors appoint~~
49 ~~a statewide study committee to conduct a thorough~~
50 ~~review of MFB as it pertains to dues, long-term~~
51 ~~financing, other revenue sources, and overall structure~~
52 ~~of the organization, and report to the Board of Directors~~
53 ~~no later than September 2011.~~

(FB 3) POLITICAL ACTION PROGRAM

1 We support Michigan Farm Bureau Political Action
2 Committee's (AgriPac) mission, which is to:

- 3 • Evaluate and endorse candidates seeking federal or
4 state office whose positions are compatible with
5 MFB policies, without regard to party affiliation.
- 6 • Allocate PAC funds to endorsed candidates.
- 7 • Promote the personal and financial involvement of
8 Farm Bureau members in the election of Friends of
9 Agriculture.
- 10 • Encourage County Farm Bureaus to further engage
11 in the electoral process.

12 The MFB AgriPac Committee is appointed by MFB's
13 president, with consent of the Board of Directors. The
14 Committee designates "Friends of Agriculture" and
15 provides a framework in which we can endorse, and
16 possibly financially support. AgriPac decisions look at the
17 "big picture" and are based on input from County
18 Candidate Evaluation Committees, voting records, and
19 possible past Farm Bureau interaction with the candidate.
20 The autonomy of the AgriPac Committee is crucial to its
21 success. Nevertheless, prompt decisions and timely
22 communication of final decisions to each county is
23 important.

24 With the increasing number of legislative and
25 regulatory issues facing agriculture, it is going to be
26 imperative that we have as many "Friends of
27 Agriculture" elected as possible.

28 Endorsements should not be withheld simply
29 because the candidate is running unopposed.

30 We ask that the AgriPac Committee research and
31 conduct, when feasible, fund raising activities to
32 increase the funds available to help elect "Friends of
33 Agriculture."

34 We encourage every member to make a voluntary
35 annual AgriPac contribution.

36 We recommend Candidate Evaluation Committees
37 include questions that address local issues.

38 We believe county Farm Bureaus should play an
39 active role in surfacing viable candidates, especially
40 Farm Bureau members, for public office in open seats.
41 We commend the county Farm Bureaus and their
42 Candidate Evaluation Committees for their active
43 involvement in recommending and electing "Friends of
44 Agriculture" ~~in the 2010 election.~~

(FB 4) PROMOTION & EDUCATION COMMITTEES

1 The purpose of the Michigan Farm Bureau Promotion
2 and Education Committee is to be responsible for
3 developing and facilitating projects and programs for all
4 members in the various age groups. Such projects and
5 programs include, but are not limited to, health and
6 safety, leadership training, agriculture in the classroom,
7 current agricultural issues, promotion of Michigan's food
8 and fiber industry, and consumer education. We
9 encourage MFB to investigate options to help finance
10 statewide promotion and education efforts.

11 We strongly encourage all county Farm Bureaus to
12 appoint and maintain an active Promotion and
13 Education Committee to address local agricultural
14 needs.

15 We commend MFB for supplying video news
16 releases and re-edited versions of the video newsletter,
17 *Farm Bureau Update*, to RFD TV and Ag Day TV, which
18 air nationwide shows, and to the Farm and Garden TV
19 show, which airs statewide.

20 We encourage MFB to continue providing video
21 production and distribution of agricultural news through
22 these media channels, as well as providing ongoing
23 video support services to the general news media
24 markets.

25 We encourage the MFB Promotion and Education
26 Committee to:

- 27 • Add additional educational materials for all grade
28 levels.
- 29 • Continue farmer education projects in farm safety,
30 farm finance and related agricultural topics.
- 31 • Educate farmers to know, prevent and address
32 vulnerabilities that would invite criticism and
33 scrutiny from non-farm press, neighbors and
34 customers.
- 35 • Continue development of in-service teacher
36 education about agriculture.
- 37 • Continue to provide educational opportunities for
38 Ag in the Classroom and support for the county
39 Promotion and Education Committees.
- 40 • Recognize an Agricultural Promoter of the Year.
- 41 • Continue to financially support the statewide
42 agricultural promotion campaign entitled Farmers
43 CARE (Commitment to Agriculture while
44 Respecting our Earth) to create a positive image of
45 Michigan agriculture's environmental commitment
46 and contributions.

47 We urge MFB to take a more aggressive leadership
48 role in a consumer education and public relations
49 campaign to provide a positive image of agriculture.

50 We encourage all Farm Bureau members to take an

51 active role in educating their neighbors and consumers
52 in an effort to spread general information on their food
53 supply and scientifically-based production practices.

54 We encourage the utilization of Farm Bureau
55 members and organizational resources to assist locally
56 in reviewing classroom curriculum for accurate
57 information concerning agriculture before its adoption.

58 ~~We urge MFB to spearhead a consortium of food~~
59 ~~industry and agricultural representatives to develop and~~
60 ~~market a public relations campaign to educate~~
61 ~~consumers. We support a proactive and aggressive~~
62 ~~effort to address attacks by activist organizations against~~
63 ~~agriculture. To promote and educate more of our~~
64 ~~consumers, we support utilizing social media, including~~
65 ~~but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter and You Tube.~~

66 We encourage Promotion & Education and
67 Communication Committees to:

- 68 • Continue and increase their presence on social
69 media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and
70 YouTube.
- 71 • Provide interactive training to members interested
72 in becoming more involved in social media.
- 73 • Surface and train agriculture leaders who are willing
74 to be active in telling the story of agriculture through
75 various social media outlets.

76 Currently, state promotion and education programs
77 are educating hundreds of thousands of children and
78 consumers with support from the American Farm
79 Bureau Federation (AFBF). The goal of these programs
80 is to promote and educate the public about agriculture.
81 We propose that AFBF continue to recognize promotion
82 and education programs by enhancing outreach and
83 networking efforts which might include a national
84 program. ~~We encourage AFBF to provide a direct link~~
85 ~~on the AFBF Web site to Promotion and Education~~
86 ~~materials from states that wish to participate.~~ Based on
87 state recommendations, AFBF has established an
88 advisory committee to review how AFBF can support
89 state Promotion and Education Committees.

(FB 5) SCHOLARSHIP

1 Michigan Farm Bureau has annually awarded a
2 scholarship to three Michigan State University students
3 who are pursuing a career in agriculture or a related
4 field.

5 Last year the scholarship was available to students
6 currently enrolled in an agricultural program at MSU
7 pursuing a two-or four-year undergraduate or post-
8 graduate degree at MSU in the College of Agriculture
9 and Natural Resources. This scholarship is called "The

10 Michigan Farm Bureau Scholarship Supported by the
11 Marge Karker Scholarship Fund." There were 11
12 applicants in 2011. We congratulate our 2011 recipients
13 Tera Koebel from Berrien County, Kyle Miller from
14 Cass County, and Meghan Bonthuis from Muskegon
15 County.

16 Recipients are selected by a committee of three MFB
17 Promotion & Education Committee members. The 2012-
18 2013 scholarship will be available to a student currently
19 enrolled in an agricultural program at MSU pursuing a
20 two- or four-year undergraduate or post-graduate
21 degree. Three \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded.
22 Scholarship applications are made available through
23 county Farm Bureau offices and the MFB Web site. The
24 application deadline is January 10, 2012.

(FB 6) YOUNG FARMERS

1 The Michigan Farm Bureau Young Farmer program,
2 designed for members 18-35, is key to the success of
3 our entire organization. The program is regarded as one
4 of the finest in the nation with a long-standing reputation
5 for building strong agricultural leaders. We oppose any
6 efforts to raise the age limit for young farmer eligibility
7 above 35 years.

8 We encourage county Farm Bureau leaders to
9 involve young farmers in all committees and boards.
10 Young farmers are the future of our organization and
11 county Farm Bureau leaders should make young farmer
12 leadership development a top priority. Because of its
13 importance to the future of the MFB organization and
14 the overall future of agriculture, we encourage all county
15 Farm Bureaus to have young farmer representation in
16 their policy development process.

17 The MFB Young Farmer Committee continues to
18 work closely with the Michigan FFA Association, FFA
19 alumni, Michigan State University Agriculture
20 Technology program, and the College of Agriculture and
21 Natural Resources, and the Michigan 4-H youth
22 programs to create an awareness of Farm Bureau and
23 the Young Farmer program. We further support the
24 Collegiate Farm Bureau chapter at MSU which involves
25 College of Agriculture and Natural Resource students in
26 the understanding of agricultural policy and leadership
27 development. We urge members who have students
28 attending MSU to encourage them to participate in the
29 Collegiate Farm Bureau. We encourage county Farm
30 Bureau leaders to build local ties with these
31 organizations.

32 The annual Young Farmer Leaders' Conference,
33 sponsored by MFB and GreenStone Farm Credit

34 Services, provides young men and women with an
35 opportunity to learn more about Farm Bureau and
36 participate in a leadership and educational program
37 designed to further enhance their management skills.
38 We urge every county Farm Bureau to send
39 representatives to the conference in **Grand Rapids,**
40 **February 17-19, 2012.**

41 MFB's Young Farmer program experienced a higher
42 level of participation at the Young Farmer Leaders'
43 Conference and Young Farmer Golf Outing. We
44 applaud the efforts of the State Young Farmer
45 Committee in continuing to build the level of leadership
46 and accountability of the entire Committee. The
47 Committee is challenged to continue improving the level
48 of leadership and success of young farmers in Michigan.

(FB 7) YOUNG PEOPLE'S CITIZENSHIP SEMINAR

1 Over the course of the last **47** years, Michigan Farm
2 Bureau's Young People's Citizenship Seminar (YPCS)
3 has helped thousands of high school juniors and seniors
4 develop a keen understanding and appreciation for our
5 nation's political process. Many officials who serve in
6 local, county and state elected positions credit YPCS for
7 spurring their initial interest in public service.

8 In order to maintain this outstanding youth program,
9 county Farm Bureaus need to recruit students to be
10 involved in the simulated electoral process. Therefore,
11 we urge every county Farm Bureau to redouble their
12 efforts to recruit the best and brightest students from
13 their county and give them an opportunity to attend the
14 YPCS seminar, June **25-28, 2012,** at Northwood
15 University in Midland.

Reaffirmation of Michigan Farm Bureau Policies

(FBR 1) COMMUNITY ACTION GROUPS

1 Community Action Groups (CAG) have served as a
2 vital link to county Farm Bureaus by providing
3 involvement through grassroots policy development,
4 promotion and education, and other programs.

5 Building and improving programs for CAGs, plus
6 starting new groups, are important goals for our county
7 and state organizations. To achieve these goals, we
8 urge county leaders to focus on the following objectives:

- 9 • Utilize current groups to help identify and sponsor
10 potential new groups with emphasis on young
11 families.
 - 12 • Review CAG activities at the monthly Board of
13 Directors meeting.
 - 14 • Invite input and involvement from the community
15 groups concerning county issues and programs.
 - 16 • Encourage all new regular members to join an
17 existing group or start one of their own.
 - 18 • Utilize *Farm Bureau Update* at group meetings to
19 keep the members up-to-date on key Farm Bureau
20 issues.
 - 21 • Provide an avenue for new technologies for member
22 engagement, using alternative methods such as
23 issue bulletin boards, discussion groups, chat rooms
24 and web-based CAGs. CAG materials are available
25 online at www.michiganfarmbureau.com/cag.
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