



Messenger

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McLean County Farm Bureau Board Member, John Burkhart (front row, second from the left), traveled to Washington DC Feb. 27 - March 1 with farmers from across the state to advocate for trade and other key issues.

Burkhart Talks Trade, Key Farm Issues on Leaders to DC Trip

Trade, infrastructure and Farm Bill priorities served as the focus during the recent Illinois Farm Bureau Leaders to Washington trip held Feb. 27 through March 1.

McLean County Farm Bureau board member, John Burkhart, participated in the delegation of 22 Illinois farmers who traveled to the nation's capital to advocate for agriculture.

Burkhart met with legislative staff on Capital Hill as well as U.S. Sens. Tammy Duckworth, D-Hoffman Estates, and Dick Durbin, D-Springfield.

Both Illinois Senators emphasized the need for farmers

to stay engaged and to speak up on issues that affect agriculture.

Other visits on the trip included the office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the U.S. Supreme Court and the Canadian Embassy.

Participants also met with USDA staff to discuss trade, conservation compliance, farm programs and regulatory reform

Illinois Farm Bureau sponsors the Leaders to Washington trip twice a year to advocate for action on ag issues.

To join the advocacy efforts, sign up for the Farm Bureau Agriculture Contact Team at www.ilfb.org/fbact.

Landowners: Seek Legal Advice Before Signing Railroad License

Landowners who receive a letter requesting them to sign a "license" agreement for a private railroad crossing should seek legal advice from a knowledgeable attorney.

In many cases, landowners may already have an easement, either written or implied, for the private crossing. An easement is legally much stronger than a license, according to Illinois Farm Bureau staff attorney, Garrett Thalgot.

Landowners should review the agreement carefully and exercise

caution as the license could strip away certain rights or make the landowner responsible for some maintenance related to the private crossing.

For more information, please contact the McLean County Farm Bureau at (309)663-6497 or anna@mcfb.org.

Farm Bureau recommends landowners consult a lawyer familiar with easements before signing any agreement regarding a private railroad crossing.

Upcoming Events

April	
Tues. 17	MCFB Board Meeting
Thurs. 26	11:30 a.m. Prime Timers Meeting at Denny's
May	
Tues. 15	MCFB Board Meeting
Mon. 28	Memorial Day - Office Closed

IFB Looking at Healthcare Issues

Prompted by rising premiums and health care costs, delegates at the 2017 Illinois Farm Bureau annual meeting asked the statewide organization to work on identifying affordable health care options for farmers.

IFB is responding with a two-pronged approach; focusing on what can be done for members from a practical standpoint while also taking a long-term policy approach.

IFB hosted a health care summit in Bloomington on March 13. The summit explored the history between IFB and our affiliate companies and health insurance, how other farm bureaus are addressing health insurance for their members, what's currently available for farmers under the Affordable Care Act, the ways in which professional associations might be helping their members with health coverage, and health sharing programs.

Two groups within IFB are working on the issue. A health care working group includes representatives from all 18 IFB districts and a Young Leader. That group is charged with finding solutions for our members based on what is available in the marketplace. A SWAT team will look at the issue longer-term.

That will include a review of IFB policy on health insurance to understand whether it is relevant in today's world and whether it meets members' needs. Both groups will consider and analyze information presented at the March summit.

The working group will meet again in July. Based on material presented at the recent summit as well as an ongoing stream of information, the group will work toward a report for both the board of directors and for delegates at the 2018 annual meeting.

Signs for Planting Season Safety

To promote safety and alert drivers about farm equipment on the roads during the upcoming planting season, McLean County Farm Bureau has 'Start Seeing Farmers' yard signs available.

The signs and stakes are available free to McLean County Farm Bureau members. Stop by our office at 2242 Westgate Drive in Bloomington to pick up signs.



McLean County Farm Bureau President, Fred Grieder (back row, far right), traveled to Brazil and Argentina on the 2018 Illinois Farm Bureau Market Study Tour. The eleven farmers and IFB staff visited the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires Feb. 1. Photo courtesy of IFB.



Fred Grieder (left) had the opportunity to tour farms and meet several South American farmers including Eduardo Cunha, who raises soybeans, corn and chickens near Cascavel, Brazil. Photo credit: Rita Frazier, Illinois Farm Bureau

Grieder Visits Brazil, Argentina on IFB 2018 Market Study Tour

Soybean yields for farmers in Brazil and Argentina have increased 40 percent during the last decade due to better seed varieties.

McLean County Farm Bureau President, Fred Grieder, participated in the recent Illinois Farm Bureau Market Study Tour to assess the competition.

Grieder traveled to Brazil and Argentina Jan. 27 through Feb. 4 along with ten other Illinois farmers to explore agricultural production, marketing, trade prospects and current regulatory environment.

The group toured port facilities, farms, processors and manufacturers as well as ag research organizations.

Participants also had the chance to visit with farmer organizations and government agencies.

Land costs tend to be lower, but input costs for seed, fertilizer and energy tend to be higher, Grieder says. South American farmers also have less access to the latest

biotech traits and are experiencing weed resistance and pest pressure.

"Most of the growers that we visited with were spraying four times for soybean rust," Grieder says.

The group learned South American farmers face similar challenges in terms of labor, barriers to biotechnology and pressure for environmental regulations.

Farmers in Brazil are paying about \$2 more per bushel to get their soybeans from farm to market than U.S. farmers. In some areas, Brazilian farmers truck their crops 700 miles one way, Grieder says.

Both countries are investing in ports and roads, but have a long ways to go. Despite the challenges, Brazil's ag exports have increased 310 percent in the past 20 years.

"U.S. farmers still have a competitive advantage in terms of infrastructure," Grieder says. "But if we do not invest in our infrastructure soon we will lose it."