**LEGISLATIVE / POLITICAL PROCESS**

**\*Stark, "Keeping Ag in the Green with Atrazine" -** Because we are very concerned with burdensome, at times predatory, regulations from the EPA that threaten common sense and farm profitability, our CFB latched on to the call from Adam Nielsen to submit comments to the EPA. Our request was simple listen to the real scientists and not the political spindoctors. Atrazine has consistently been found to be safe - in fact there is more than 7,000 scientific studies backing atrazine's safety. Even their own Science Advisory Panel finds it to be safe. After the WOTUS fiasco, our guard is on high and we worry that despite the best minds, the EPA will succumb to outliers and activists instead of scientists and farmers. To get cards signed and returned our CFB set up at our local FS customer appreciation dinner. Beyond FS, we also will be approaching other chemical dealers in the area. Additionally our CFB is working with FS to identify our members/their clients who are stakeholders. We are sending them the cards in the mail to better ensure that we get every farmer's voice heard. Because this is not just for farmers, we included this in our weekly newspaper column and scheduled Facebook posts touting Atrazine's safety. Atrazine will also be brought up on the monthly CFB radio program. Our goal is to collect at least 150 comment cards. As of 8/31/2016 we have 95 completed cards. At present, the goal of 150 may be reevaluated and raised due to enthusiasm from members.

**Gallatin, "Annual Legislative Lunch" -** 10 volunteers worked together to provide a great legislative program to our members. We invited all of our federal and state legislators, along with all local government officials, various department heads throughout the state, and IFB legislative staff. We had almost 100 people in attendance for this program. This year we were honored to have a state Senator and state Representative attend and many other local officials. We also had a Governmental Affairs IFB staff attend to give a Farm Bureau update. We were also happy to see faces from various local agriculture companies come out to visit and show support. All guests had an opportunity to speak to the group and answer any questions from our members. We provided a lunch of rib-eye steak sandwiches, corn on the cob, sides, and desserts. This is a wonderful event that gives our members a chance to personally interact with our legislators and always gets positive feedback.

**Scott, "COUNTY GROUP TO WASHINGTON DC" -** The FB planned, organized, and funded a three-day leadership trip to Washington DC in March. The main goal of the trip is education on many issues facing agriculture and the business of farming. Secondary to this is to build an understanding of the complex nature of public policy and the many factors that influence that policy—both internal and external. We held discussions with national and international business, media, science, and policy leaders. The focus of the trip was climate change science, media and agriculture in an election year. Included on the itinerary were visits with the Argentinian Embassy, NASA, AFBF, our Congressmen and his staff, Animal Ag Alliance, Waterways Conference Inc., Renewable Fuels Association, Center for Responsive Politics and the National Association of Counties. The group visited with several POLITICO reporters at their office. They also participated in a legislative reception hosted by two national water associations. Seven county leaders, three leaders from an adjoining county, and staff participated in the trip. The participants were involved in issue identification, introduction of host speakers, and presentations. They held a pre-trip briefing. They also held daily briefings and debriefings while in Washington DC. Participants were presented with briefing papers on the groups, people, and issues they would study. Each participant was responsible to serve as a group leader during each meeting or dinner function. We discussed FB policy with agency officials directly impacting our members. We identified issues of direct concern to county members with Congressional staff members. Our goal of empowering the participants was exceeded as exemplified by the enthusiasm of the group upon our return. An added benefit was the relationships between participants that will pay dividends to the organization well into the future. We have also built relationships with agency officials and diplomats that we continue to foster. 2 counties

**Pulaski-Alexander, "Congressman's visit to Levee Devastation" -** A Federal Congressman visited the devastated area following the breech of a local levee. Contacts were made to his office by local members to make a scheduled visit with local farmers to see first-hand the devastation of the levee breech and the damage it caused. Local farmers and members planned and contacted the congressman's legislative aid and drove him across sand, barren land that used to be farmland and on to the levee to see the negative impact of the mighty Mississippi. He was shown pictures of before, during, and after for comparison purposes and he was able to ride in a helicopter over the area to fully understand. He spoke with the local, highway department engineer to understand the effects on local roads and infrastructure. After the tour, he had a better grasp on the needs and concerns that come with farming next to levee. Our county hopes that this will bring more awareness to the national platform on necessary funding for levee repairs and maintenance.

**Brown, "Citizens for Representatives" -** To show our appreciation to our Representative, Legislative Political Committee, Seven County Farm Bureau Managers, and Presidents gathered for coffee one morning to present "Friend of Agriculture" Award to our Representative based on her 100% voting record during the 99th Illinois General Assembly. Her support on Legislative issues impacting Illinois agriculture shows that she will fight for Illinois farmers.

**\*Mercer, "Farm Tour with Congresswoman's District Director" -** Our County Farm Bureau hosted a farm tour with our Congresswoman's Legislative Director. She grew up in Maine and was not raised around agriculture so she is very unfamiliar with Illinois agriculture. The tour started out at a local cooperative where the General Manager talked to her about how the EPA's new classification of anhydrous ammonia to a more hazardous chemical has impacted their business. The new classification has done nothing but cause ag retailers more paperwork to jump through. It is just one more example of the EPA's overreach. We then took the Legislative Director on a farm tour and showed her cover crops and what they are doing to protect soil health and fertility. We also showed her an ephemeral stream (that currently did not have any standing water) to point out what could potentially be regulated by the EPA under the Waters of the United States ruling. We hope her afternoon in our county helped her to understand how the EPA's general overreach is impacting small ag businesses and family farmers.

**Franklin, "Action Request Calls and Texts" -** Our county FBs major focus is on getting as many members to make Action Request calls as possible. We have worked very hard to accumulate a list of over 200 names and phone numbers of those interested in being involved in making these calls. Our FB Manager and Office Assistant take it upon themselves to call each person on the list to let them know about the issue. Even though many of these people are FB Act Members we still take the opportunity to make the personal calls. Once the call has been made then a text is sent with the information for the call along with the names and phone numbers of the Legislators that need to be contacted. The person then either calls the office back or send a text to let us know that they have made their contacts. Most people would find this a tedious process but we find that this also gives us an opportunity to talk to them about the results of the last Action Request. Our members are getting more involved in the issues and in FB as a whole. Our county FB is very proud of the accomplishments that have been made in the county and have put our county on the map as a whole. We averaged 93 calls per Action Request for the year making us No. 1 in the state. The purpose of the Action Request Calls is to engage our members to make contact with their Legislators concerning the issues. Sometimes it takes several days to call everyone on our list. When we sign up a new member we always get their phone number (cell is possible) and then their name goes on our list for future calls. We explain to them what the process will be should an Action Request come up and they then know what to expect. Each person who makes their call is considered a volunteer since it is not actually their job.

**Pike, "COUNTY GROUP TO WASHINGTON DC" -** The FB planned, organized, and funded a three-day leadership trip to Washington DC in March. The main goal of the trip is education on many issues facing agriculture and the business of farming. Secondary to this is to build an understanding of the complex nature of public policy and the many factors that influence that policy—both internal and external. We held discussions with national and international business, media, science, and policy leaders. The focus of the trip was climate change science, media and agriculture in an election year. Included on the itinerary were visits with the Argentinian Embassy, NASA, AFBF, Congressmen and their staff, Animal Ag Alliance, Waterways Conference Inc., Renewable Fuels Association, Center for Responsive Politics and the National Association of Counties. The group visited with several POLITICO reporters at their office. They also participated in a legislative reception hosted by two national water associations. Seven county leaders, three leaders from an adjoining county, and staff participated in the trip. The participants were involved in issue identification, introduction of host speakers, and presentations. They held a pre-trip briefing. They also held daily briefings and debriefings while in Washington DC. Participants were presented with briefing papers on the groups, people, and issues they would study. Each participant was responsible to serve as a group leader during each meeting or dinner function. We discussed FB policy with agency officials directly impacting our members. We identified issues of direct concern to county members with Congressional staff members. Our goal of empowering the participants was exceeded as exemplified by the enthusiasm of the group upon our return. An added benefit was the relationships between participants that will pay dividends to the organization well into the future. We have also built relationships with agency officials and diplomats that we continue to foster. 2 counties

**Crawford, "Coffee Chats with U.S. Representative" -** To help foster a closer relationship between our counties and our U.S. Representative we held a breakfast. This was our first year holding a program like this so we kept it fairly small by only inviting the two county farm bureau boards and our ACTIVATOR trustees. It was a great time to visit and learn more about our Representative, while also expressing where Farm Bureau stands on the issues. Our Representative votes with the Farm Bureau a majority of the time so we were also able to thank him for his support. We look forward to continuing this program next year and hope to make it bigger.

**McDonough, " Legislator Pocket Reference" -** NEED: Our members were in need of something small that listed their legislators contact information. PROCEDURE: Since we are fortunate to live in a county that doesn't divide legislators up depending on address, this worked quite well by designing a third of a sheet front and back with our legislators information. The sheets were made available to members in the office and at events. IMPACT: Several members have commented about how handy they sheets are and have asked for more to distribute to other local service groups.

**\*Wayne, "Legislative Listening Session" -** We feel it is a priority to maintain an open and positive relationship with our federal and state elected officials. Therefore, each year we invite our congressman, state senators, and state representatives to a monthly board meeting to discuss Illinois Farm Bureau’s legislative priorities for the spring session. This year we held a joint board meeting with an adjacent county Farm Bureau, as each county shares the same legislators. Topics discussed with our state legislators included the Illinois budget shortfall, maintaining tax incentives for agriculture, funding for soil & water conservation districts, maintaining a reduction of property taxes on filter strips, overweight tolerances on trucks during a harvest emergency, opposition to Illinois' minimum wage law, opposition to increased gun control measures, consolidation of units of local government, and the Governor's proposed freeze on property taxes. National issues discussed with our congressional representatives were the future of the Renewal Fuel Standard, exporting US produced crude oil, funding for lock and dam repair, WOTUS, implementation of the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy, GMO labeling, the slow rate of seed approval by USDA, agribusiness monopolies, and federal gun control. These sessions were very helpful in allowing our legislators to hear firsthand, the issues our farmers were concerned with. It also allowed an opportunity for our Farm Bureau directors to strengthen their individual roles as spokespeople for agriculture. We had agricultural liaisons from one U.S. Senator, one U.S. Congressman, 1 Illinois Senator, and 1 Illinois Representative attend our program (total of 5), plus 23 Farm Bureau directors from two counties attend our program.

**Fulton, "Meet the Candidate Night" -** Held in cooperation with our Chamber of Commerce at a local community center. 2 of our volunteers obtained a sample ballot, researched candidate addresses on the internet, and sent invitations to everyone included on the ballot; federal, state, county, and judgeships. We had 32 candidates attend and over 60 citizens. A local cable channel recorded the event and played it several times during the following week in area communities

**Jo Daviess, "County Board - agriculture as a priority" -** Our CFB met with our County Board's planning and development committee and were able to show them the importance of agriculture in the county. So much that they voted to put a priority on promoting agriculture. We are currently spearheading an ag promotion effort with other organizations to do just that - promote agriculture. The County Board has also committed to this goal financially, but giving us a significant donation towards the cause.

**Lee, "Action Request Drawing" -** In an effort to encourage more members to participate in action requests and to reward those members that do, the Governmental Affairs Committee created a drawing. Each member who reports their contacts from an action request will be entered into a drawing for a $25 gift card for each elected official they contacted. One winner is selected after each action request. The winner is published on the CFB Facebook page and CFB publication in an effort to increase awareness for participation in action requests and to recognize the member for their participation.

**\*Kankakee, "Congresswoman and Co FB Host Women in Ag Discussion" -** The County Farm Bureau arranged and hosted a meeting between our US Congresswoman and prominent area women in agriculture.The group discussed the rewards and challenges in each of their agricultural careers. Each discussed how technology has become a large part of agriculture and the importance of communicating agriculture’s story to the non-farming public. Our Congresswoman learned more about our industry, the issues we face, and she discussed ways she could further encourage women to become involved in our industry. These Women in Agriculture who participated in the session were the Director of the Ag & Horticulture program at the Community College, a Pioneer Seed sales account manager; a Grain Originator at the FS company; Office Manager at the FS company; and a farmer with and her two daughters who are involved in their family farm. This group included 2 of our more active Young Leaders.Each of the meeting participants had at some point assisted in educating the public about agriculture through the Farm Bureau’s Agriculture in the Classroom program and the annual Kids Day at the Farm event. The group decided to host a discussion later on to encourage other women to consider the field of careers in agriculture. A local newspaper placed an article about this meeting on the front page with a photo from the event which increased the reach of this effort.

**Livingston, "What a Debate!" -** With the county being primarily Republican, the primary election for circuit clerk, coroner and State’s Attorney had gotten very contentious. We felt it was vital that citizens be educated before they hit the polls. With the race beginning to heat up, we had constituents submit their questions beforehand. Our legislative committee met early the night of the event to select the questions they felt would be the most valuable. We worked with the local radio station to have one of their personalities serve as the MC for the evening. We then worked with the local radio station, newspaper and our FB publication to advertise the event. After the questions were collaborated by the committee, all 5 candidates took the stage. Our MC along with our legislative committee chairman sat on the stage to read questions as well. Attendees could submit questions that night as well but the committee reviewed them to decide if they would be asked. The sole candidate for circuit clerk introduced herself to the audience first. Next was the coroner's candidates. Each gave a 3 minute opening statement followed by 45 minutes of questions. The same format went for the state's attorney's candidates. Candidates could give their answers but there was no debate. The forum gave the candidates an opportunity to share their ideas on how they would run their perspective offices and attendees the chance to learn more about the candidates running for office, so they may make an educated decision at the polls. Because the forums were sponsored by FB, Radio Station and Local Newspaper, we received a tremendous amount of recognition in all the advertising media.

**Bureau, "Activator Program Review with the Board" -** In February, when new board members were placed, the board was surveyed about programs in which they wanted more information. Activator was chosen as one of those programs. At the July board meeting the entire board took time to review the program. Each board member received a packet of information highlighting Activator, outlining the Friend of Agriculture Award and then explaining expectations of trustees. Each Activator Trustee also received a copy of the by-laws. It is the hope of leadership within the county that with the gained knowledge of the program, more active trustees are produced which will engage more in the conversation and represent the county in an effective manner.

**Henry, "Legislator Contact Incentives" -** Our county Farm Bureau Directors, members and volunteers do a phenomenal job of contacting legislators whenever action requests are issued. No matter the topic they make calls, send emails, write letters and post on social media to get the word out and encourage others. To award our volunteers for their work on action requests, our Legislative Action committee established a year-long contest to award them for their efforts. For each contact made and reported to the County Farm Bureau that individual receives an entry into an award drawing. At the end of the year those that responded to every action request will receive an additional entry. The grand prize winner will then receive a $75.00 gift card and additional items to be determined by the chair. Many directors continue to monitor their progress and are even more motivated to contacted their legislators. From our 72 FBACT members, 47 reported, thus totaling 223 contacts to legislators!

**Adams, "Legislative Luncheon" -** Our local State Representative and Senator joined us for a lunch meeting on February 26th to give us an update on current legislative happenings in Springfield. This was a priority of our legislative committee to get both the Senator and Representative together to discuss what is happening in Springfield so our members could hear directly from them and more importantly the elected officials could hear from our members. We held the lunch in a private room at local restaurant starting at 11:30. They were very candid and spent a long time answering questions from the crowd. There were over 65 in attendance. This was particularly interesting as they are from different party lines so we were able to get both sides and views of the issues.

**Stephenson, "Adopted Legislator Program" -** We enjoyed a great 8-year relationship with our now-retired former adopted legislator, and we are now in our fourth year of a positive relationship with our new adoptee, a state representative from the south side of Chicago and south suburbs. We have made four district visits and enjoy an extended visit with her over dinner each year during the IAA Annual Meeting, and we brought a busload of her constituents to our county in September 2013 for "A Day in the Country" after similar tours in 2005, 2008 and 2010. This year she and her office assistant came out during harvest for a combine ride and some tours, and we are working on plans for another busload of constituents visiting next summer along with another district visit and tour. On previous district tours we have visited the Chicago High School for Ag Sciences, Cook County Jail, Beverly Arts Center, an inner city high school, and a new fire station.

**\*Kane, "Harvest Leadership Picnic” -** Sept. 23, 2015: (Legis Apprec.& Acquaint) Legislative Committee hosted their 9th Harvest Picnic for public officials to thank, inform and acquaint legislators and local officials with our members and issues. Also invited Co. Board, Co. elected and appointed officials, mayors, township clerks, supervisors, assessors and highway commissioners. FB Board and Legis Comm served as hosts. 170 attended. Catered meal inlcuded pork chops, bratwurst and sweet corn, specialty crop producers provide remainder of meal. Volunteers also helped our farmer-host transform his greenhouse into a banquet hall with stage and screen for the presentations and husked the sweet corn, served the wine and the meal, and cleaned up the greenhouse afterwards. Event included a local wine and cheese reception, 4 different tours and demonstrations of the greenhouse operations, fall harvest combine ride sign-up for public officials, green industry quiz ice-breaker, local farm product sampling and displays from 4 grower groups and agencies were among the activities. Officials learned about the green industry, nurseries and greenhouses. 170 attended with 50 public officials. CFB asked for comments from the host (the County's largest agricultural employer), and did an after dinner recognition program for volunteers. The event resulted in many productive conversations among the guests in attendance, which included local public officials and their guests or staff.

**Peoria, "Grassroots Picnic" -** Eighty-five people attended our annual Grassroots Picnic held at our Farm Bureau Park. All of our elected officials serving in our county and also the candidates that will be on the November ballot were invited. All of our "M" members were invited. The picnic was held on August 23. A questionnaire was handed to members as they arrived and was then gathered after the meeting was complete. A catered pork chop meal was served at 6 p.m. After people were finished with their meal, our County Farm Bureau Legislative Chairman introduced each candidate in attendance. There were a total of 10. They included people running for Congress, State Representative, States Attorney, County Board, Circuit Clerk, County Auditor, and Circuit Judge. All of the candidates did a great job in giving a brief background on themselves and why they were running for office. Also, our county Farm Bureau President presented the Friend of Agriculture Award to one of our State Representatives and a plaque was also presented to a County Board member that represented a rural section of the community for 27 years. They were both very appreciative of the recognition. It was a very pleasant evening weather-wise for an outside event and people remained for quite a while after the program was complete to visit.

**Champaign, "Ag Influencer`s Reception" -** With schedules being ever so busy but yet more and more issues impacting agriculture, volunteers scheduled an ag influencer`s reception with the goal of getting those that influence our industry on the local, state and national level together in one evening. Volunteers reached out to 25 ag influencer's ranging from representatives from our community college, statewide commodity group district representatives and our local and state elected officials. The volunteers established a date and timeframe for the event and ensured that invitations went out to the influencer`s. Invitations were sent out explaining that of the 25 invitee`s 18 would be attending, these invitations went out via electronic notices, social media and flyers at various events prior. Several of our volunteers decorated the room and brought in food for the event. In all, 77 members had a great opportunity to visit with the influencer`s from our region representing dozens of groups and entities that truly have an impact on our agriculture industry. Additionally, they were able to get their issues addressed while gaining a better understanding of the position of the influencer`s in a casual setting.

**Cook, "County Key Votes" -** 9 Policy Team volunteers and 1 staff member reviewed county board voting records and identified issues of importance to members. INTENT: Prior to the June meeting, staff compiled: \* Approved county legislation pertinent to Farm Bureau \* Related policies \* List of actions undertaken by the organization Staff then compiled a list of: \* Ordinances \* Resolutions \* Descriptions \* Related policy \* Recommended values. High priority ordinances and resolutions were then assigned points based on their significance. In June, 9 Policy Team volunteers reviewed and approved the document and the point values. Also in June, 9 Policy Team volunteers approved the document and presented it to 12 board members for final approval. 2 volunteers discussed the document with 100% of county board members. The final “key vote” document included: \* Description of each ordinance and resolution \* Statement of Farm Bureau policy \* Each county board member's final score and percentage NEEDS MET: This project identified significant county issues, provided a basis for recognition for an outstanding voting records, and educated elected officials about agricultural issues. This project also enabled us to track county board members' positions on priority issues over an extended period of time. IMPACT: 18 county board members benefited from this project. VOLUNTEERS: 21 Policy Team and board volunteers planned, reviewed, and participated in this project and 2 volunteers discussed the results with 100% of the county board.

**Tazewell, "Congressman Learns about Farming" -** Our Adopted Legislator was selected to serve as Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee. Since he does not have a farming background, he was invited to visit farms in our area. The State Senator came and visited various farm sites beginning with a farm with high quality Angus cattle, approximately 250-300 cattle. A local group of farmers joined the Senator for lunch at a farm to table restaurant. Then the group visited a local Horse Farm with Saddlebred horses. A Dairy Farm was next with up to date technology such as robotic milkers and artificial insemination, embryo transfer and other technologies to produce the highest quality animals possible. Last on the tour was a farm where soybeans were being planted. The planter and seed selection were introduced to the Senator. The Senator had the opportunity to ride on a tractor and plant soybeans. The Senator said that he did not realize what all was involved in farming in 2016 and he was pleased to introduced to so many areas of farming.