



January – February 2023 | Vol. 14, Issue 1

Local Government Priorities

Local Government Priorities

*Creates local support for
agriculture.*



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Our Mission

To improve county Farm Bureau® influence in local government issues and advance county Farm Bureau leaders' awareness, capability, and involvement in local government through information and assistance in understanding and planning on local government issues.

Call to Action

We encourage you to share LINK with county Farm Bureau leadership and membership.

We encourage you to share this publication with your local officials. This information may be a LINK to their success.

Upcoming Dates & Events

February 22-23:

Illinois Rural Economic Development Conference

February 23:

Early voting begins

February 28:

Consolidated Primary Election

(for municipalities over 5,000 in population and those smaller than that which have chosen to use the partisan approach)

March 6-10:

Local Government Week

April 4:

Consolidated Elections

April 11:

Annual town meeting



INTRODUCTION

2023 Local Government Priorities Offer ‘Win-Win’ Solutions



Jeff Kirwan

Change doesn't happen overnight; it takes effort, planning and careful execution. To make the most impact, it also requires partnerships and working together

toward common solutions.

Illinois Farm Bureau's Local Government Priorities provide starting points for county Farm Bureaus to work with their local officials. This edition of LINK breaks down the 2023 priorities and offers tips for how county Farm Bureaus can involve their leaders and members in promoting them.

The IFB Board of Directors approved its second annual set of local government priorities in January. This year's list includes the Allies in Agriculture program, Pro-Agriculture Resolutions, local government finance and fiscal transparency, and rural development.

Jeff Kirwan, IFB District 3 director and Illinois Government Committee

chairman, said the statewide priorities were selected based on relevance. "That's the beauty about redefining our Local Government Priorities each year – we can refocus our efforts on issues that are important to our members right now," he said.

“That’s the beauty about redefining our Local Government Priorities each year – we can refocus our efforts on issues that are important to our members right now.”

CFBs are encouraged to incorporate at least one priority from the list into relationship-building efforts with local units of government throughout the year. This targeted approach allows for more focused, meaningful conversations to take place.

Last year, one CFB in Kirwan's district worked with the county board to pass a Pro-Ag Resolution. This year, he said

at least two others are planning to do the same, and he's looking forward to seeing more CFBs join the effort.

Enacting policy changes within county government isn't as simple as a one-time conversation between CFBs and local representatives. It requires consistent touchpoints and follow-up to educate both parties on the issue, which is when Kirwan said it becomes a "win-win."

"There's a whole suite of ag-related issues that we, as Farm Bureau, know about, that local officials may not," said Kirwan. "It takes people at every level of the Farm Bureau chain, from managers to members, to work together to talk with their local officials and help them make a decision about things like Pro-Ag Resolutions and rural development."

Not all projects CFBs are working on fit within the outlined Local Government Priorities. For those who are working in other areas, keep in mind that it's OK to work toward goals that best fit the community.





LOCAL GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

ALLIES IN AGRICULTURE

The local government team, working with county Farm Bureaus, will encourage a partnership with local officials.

The IFB Local Government Team will be available to assist CFBs in:

- Understanding local government roles and responsibilities,
- Explaining the role of CFBs to units of local government, and
- Developing and implementing programs encouraging membership to engage with local officials.

PRO-AGRICULTURE RESOLUTION

The local government team, working with county Farm Bureaus, will work to pass a Pro-Agriculture Resolution to be adopted by county government(s). **The resolution will:**

- State the importance of agriculture,
- Support development of all types of agriculture, and
- Pledge support of agriculture from county officials and staff.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE AND FISCAL TRANSPARENCY

The local government team, working with county Farm Bureaus, will advocate for a stronger understanding of local government finance and promotion of local government financial transparency and fiscal responsibility.

This will include working with CFB staff and leadership on Illinois' overall tax policy, property assessment and taxation. Communicating local government expenditure obligations and support for uniform budgeting.

In addition, we will continue to advocate the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars, and infrastructure dollars be spent within rural areas.

Local use of these dollars should:

- Provide essential services to residents in the rural area of the county,
- Provide vital infrastructure projects enabling agriculture to succeed, and
- Develop and deliver rural broadband.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The local government team, working with county Farm Bureaus and other stakeholders, will focus on rural development. **These efforts will include:**

- Partnering with organizations focused on rural development at the local, state and federal levels,
- A focus on the Rural Development title in the next farm bill,
- Cross-team efforts within Illinois Farm Bureau, and
- Assessing needs to determine what resources, tools and support will be most impactful.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's Up to Us to Create Allies in Agriculture



Richard Guebert, Jr.

When you work in agriculture like we do, it's easy to remember we represent the No. 1 industry in Illinois. For those who don't, it's up to us to remind them.

We're excited to launch the Allies in Agriculture program, a partnership effort between Farm Bureau and

county government officials to explain the role agriculture plays in a county's well-being.

One of the steps county Farm Bureaus can take in creating Allies in Agriculture is to work with their county board to pass a Pro-Agriculture Resolution.

Fifteen county Farm Bureaus worked with their county government boards last year to adopt the Pro-Agriculture Resolution. By doing so, those 15 county boards stated they understand agriculture's importance there and are proud to support its success.

That's a great response in the first year of the program, and I appreciate those county Farm Bureaus for jumping into action quickly.

For the other counties, nobody knows better than you how important agriculture is where you live. The time to engage your county officials is now.

March 21-27 is National Agriculture Week. What better time for us to work with our county government boards and see how many of them we can get to pass their own resolution and reinforce their position as an Ally in Agriculture?

We're here to help. Keep reading this edition of LINK to learn more about Allies in Agriculture, along with our other newly approved local government priorities. We'll give you information and best practices for engaging your local officials with the Pro-Agriculture Resolution. And reach out to our Local Government Team with questions.

Be sure to tell us about your experience working with your county boards to pass the Pro-Agriculture Resolution – we want to celebrate your success with you!

Partnerships Drive County Support for Ag

March a Perfect Time to Push for Pro-Ag Resolution Passage

How much do elected officials in your area know about the economic impacts agriculture makes at the county, municipal and even the household level? An ongoing Illinois Farm Bureau local government priority aims to use the Allies in Agriculture program to continue to show them.

Through this priority, IFB partners with county Farm Bureaus to equip them with the information and resources they can use to educate county government board members on these benefits.

Communication drives this priority as county Farm Bureau leaders and members help county government officials better understand the local significance of agriculture. In exchange, Farm Bureau members gain a better understanding of how county government works and the benefits it provides in their communities.

The partnerships result in better dialog, understanding and respect on both sides.

Allies in Agriculture began last year, with 15 county government boards adopting Pro-Agriculture Resolutions. These resolutions represent public recognitions that agriculture is important and has the support of those elected officials.

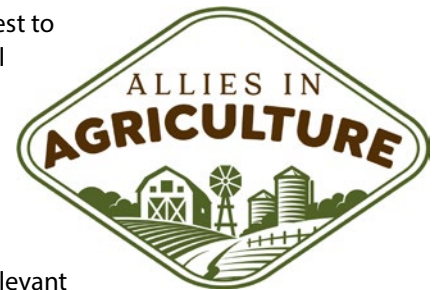
For counties that successfully achieved resolution passage last year, a new board requires a new resolution to be passed this year.

For those that haven't, March is the perfect time.

By now, new county board members have had time to get acclimated to their role. And with National Ag Week coming next month and spring planting right around the corner, it's a great time to bring awareness to agriculture through adoption of Pro-Agriculture Resolutions.

Follow This Checklist for Getting Pro-Ag Resolution Passed:

- ☐ **1** Identify topics of interest to your members that will also resonate with local officials and prioritize them in your conversations.
- ☐ **2** Do your research and make sure you have relevant facts and figures for those topics.
- ☐ **3** Work with IFB's Local Government Team to draft a resolution highlighting ag's importance in your county.
- ☐ **4** Share the resolution with local elected county board members.



Q&A WITH KATIE LALEMAN, HENRY CFB MANAGER

Pro-Ag Resolutions Culminate Strong Relationships with County Boards

Henry County is one of 14 Illinois counties to pass a Pro-Agriculture Resolution so far.

Katie Laleman, FBCM, Henry County Farm Bureau manager for the past 20 years, points to long relationships between Farm Bureau and the county board as an important factor in getting the resolution passed.

In this Q&A, Laleman walks through the history of Henry County Farm Bureau's relationship with the county board and the importance of the Pro-Ag Resolution in the future.



Katie Laleman, FBCM

LINK: How does Henry County Farm Bureau engage with local government?

LALEMAN: One thing that has always been important here in Henry County is working with local government. Staying informed is one of the biggest things. I regularly attend county board meetings and have those connections

with county board members, so when there are any issues that come up, not only do they look to us as a reliable source of information, but also have that open communication with them if there is an issue that we feel strongly about with our Farm Bureau members or policy that we can talk with them about.

LINK: Why is it important for county Farm Bureau managers to be engaged in local government?

LALEMAN: As the manager of the Farm Bureau, we're seen as being the front person for the organization and being that representative. I feel, many times, when I attend county board meetings or county committee meetings or have a conversation with an elected official, they see me as the face of Farm Bureau. It is very important to have that connection. Whatever may be happening, I want to be informed myself. I want to be able to know I have that information before I start getting calls from our members.

LINK: Are there any initiatives Henry County Farm Bureau has been able to influence because you're engaged?

LALEMAN: One very recent one was our Pro-Ag Resolution that we took to our county board, just supporting agriculture in general. Of course, we're a very rural county and there's so much agriculture here in Henry County. But just to know we have the support of our county board going forward, whenever there may be issues, we felt like that was really great for us to have. We're proud we were



County Farm Bureau leaders from 14 counties came together with county government board leaders to pass Pro-Agriculture Resolutions last year. Two recent examples were Henry County (top) and Will County.

able to take the initiative forward and get it adopted by our county board.

LINK: What advice would you share with newer county Farm Bureau managers on why they should engage with local government?

LALEMAN: I think it's very important for our local government to see Farm Bureau and see us being active, engaged, wanting to be a participant with them to help inform our members and be there whenever issues arrive. To be able to tell them you are the Farm Bureau manager, you are the representative, you are the person for them to contact should anything come up where you can work together.

ACTION ITEM

Join Us in Making Local Government Finance a Priority

Many of us started the new year with a plan to manage our own personal and business finances. Local units of government are doing the same. What they decide not only impacts your budget but also valuable services impacting your security and comfort. Finding a balance between the two is where your engagement and understanding of local government finance pays off! Included in the 2023 local government priorities is a challenge to do just that.

One of this year's priorities is to engage in local government finance and promote fiscal transparency and responsibility at the local level. This starts with a better understanding of local government revenue sources and spending obligations.

On the revenue side, property, sales and income taxes are the primary sources of general funding for most units of local government. Of those three, property tax is generally the largest contributor. This is a revenue source that provides more stability when compared to sales and income taxes.

2023 PRIORITY:

Local Government Finance and Fiscal Transparency

The local government team, working with county Farm Bureaus, will advocate for a stronger understanding of local government finance and promotion of local government financial transparency and fiscal responsibility.

This will include working with CFB staff and leadership on Illinois' overall tax policy, property assessment and taxation. Communicating local government expenditure obligations and support for uniform budgeting.

In addition, we will continue to advocate the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars, and infrastructure dollars be spent within rural areas. Local use of these dollars should:

- Provide essential services to residents in the rural area of the county,
- Provide vital infrastructure projects enabling agriculture to succeed, and
- Develop and deliver rural broadband.

In addition to tax revenue, local units of government often fund specific projects and program areas with grants and user fees. These dollars often do not have flexibility in spending and are earmarked for designated expenditures. Units of local government have much more discretion with tax revenue.

With property tax as a primary revenue source for local government and a growing expense for property owners, this is an area where we should engage!

While there is no uniform timeline for county budgeting, most counties' fiscal years run from January 1 to December 31. In that case, they begin their budget process in the fall, often in September or October. During this time, the finance committee in counties structured under the township form of government, or the committee as a whole in counties structured under the commission form of government prepares a tentative budget. These early meetings are open to the public and offer a great opportunity for transparency and information sharing on revenue needs and spending.

Over the course of the budget process, there are other opportunities for the public to engage, including:

- A public hearing prior to approving the final budget
- Review of the published tax levy request and total amount budgeted for individual funds
- Attending Truth in Taxation meetings (required to be held if the proposed aggregate levy is greater than 5% of the previous year's tax extension)

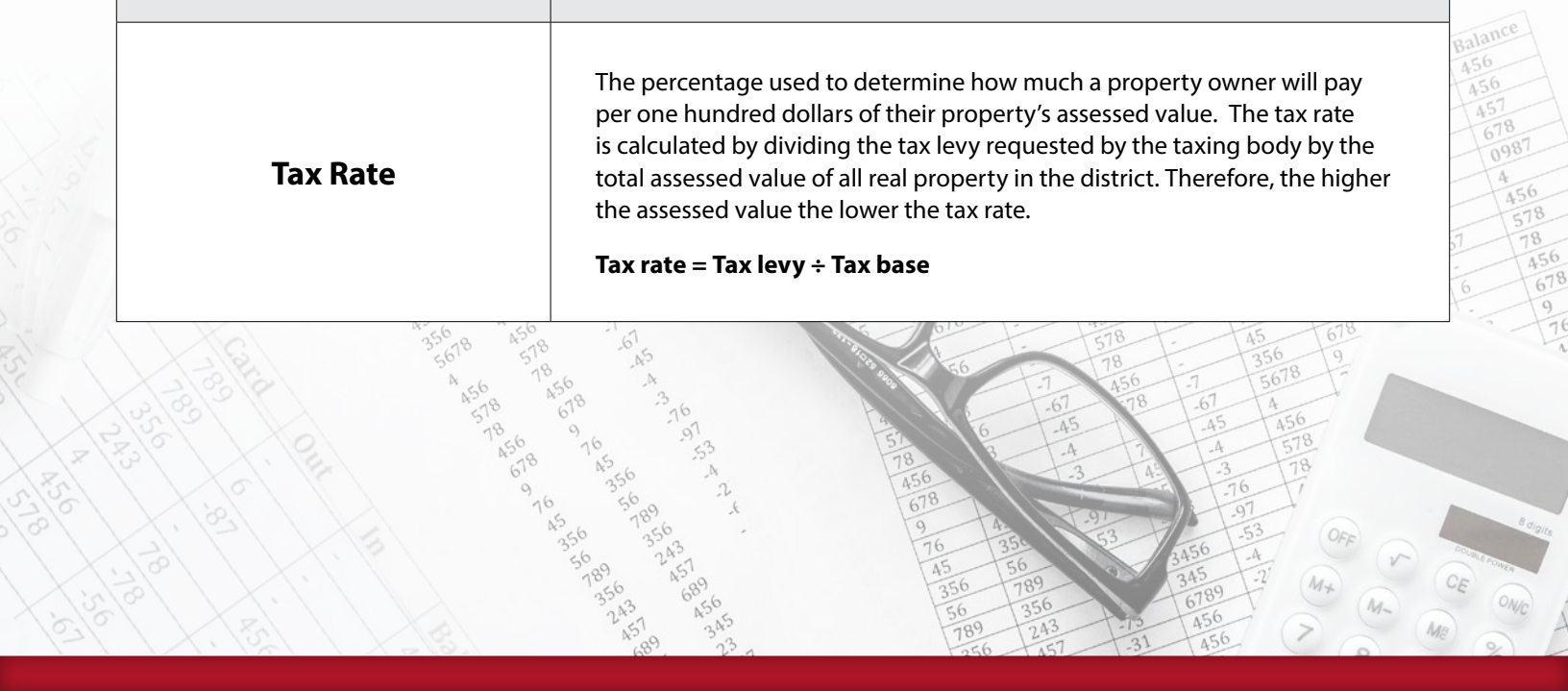
Except for a few mandatory services, the expenditure side of the equation is largely driven by the wants and needs of citizens in the district. At the county level, these can include services addressing transportation, public health and safety needs and recreational interests. **Opportunities to engage and manage expenses include:**

- Promoting intergovernmental cooperation
- Advocating for spending on services that specifically address rural needs
- Encouraging your county government to adopt a Pro-Agriculture Resolution recognizing agriculture as an economic engine within the county and supporting the need for rural services and infrastructure

As we continue into the new year, county Farm Bureaus can play a significant role in advocating for local government fiscal responsibility and promotion of the 2023 local government priorities.

BUILD YOUR VOCABULARY**Glossary of Tax-Related Terms**

Assessed Value	A dollar amount placed on real property based on fractional percentage of 33 1/3% of that property's market value, income earning potential or cost of construction. That value determines how the tax burden will be distributed among the taxpayers.
Property Tax	A local tax imposed against real property by government taxing districts (e.g., school districts, municipalities, counties) based on the property's value. The property tax is the primary source of revenue supporting local units of governments.
Property Tax Extension	The process in which the the county clerk applies the multiplier, calculates the tax rate needed to produce the amount of revenues each taxing district has requested, then distributes that amount among the properties in a taxing district according to their assessed values so that tax bills can be calculated.
Tax Caps	Limits placed on the increase in property taxes in counties that have passed the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL). These prevent overall property tax levies from rising in any one year more than five percent or the rate of inflation – whichever is less, with some exceptions.
Tax Levy	The total amount of property taxes a taxing body, such as a school district, requests to operate for the upcoming year. The tax levy is the basis for determining the tax rate, within taxing district boundaries, for each of the taxing bodies.
Tax Rate	<p>The percentage used to determine how much a property owner will pay per one hundred dollars of their property's assessed value. The tax rate is calculated by dividing the tax levy requested by the taxing body by the total assessed value of all real property in the district. Therefore, the higher the assessed value the lower the tax rate.</p> <p>Tax rate = Tax levy ÷ Tax base</p>



ELEVATING RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Partnerships with CFBs, Other Organizations Among Planned Efforts

One of the strengths of Farm Bureau is its commitment to grassroots policy development, providing members with the opportunity to provide input and lead on issues important to them. The policy-development process runs throughout the year and culminates with the actions taken by voting delegates at the IFB Annual Meeting each December.

The latest results of this process can be found in our **2023 Policy Book**. Over the course of 105 pages, you can find our organization's position on a vast and wide ranging array of issues that impact our members.

One of the topic areas our policy book covers is rural development (page 83-84 if you want to check it out!). In fact, the very first item under this policy section states that IFB "supports placing rural development as one of our highest priorities." As the local government team considered this strong organizational statement of support for rural development, it led us to include rural development as one of our four local government priorities for 2023 as we strive to elevate and provide additional attention to this issue.

We want to work with county Farm Bureaus and other stakeholders to place an increased emphasis on rural development in the coming year. **These efforts include:**

- Partnering with other organizations interested in rural development issues.
- Placing more focus on the rural development title of the next farm bill.
- Collaborating with our colleagues in the organization where interests overlap on this topic.
- Working to determine what resources, tools and support local communities need to be able to maximize the rural development opportunities available to them.

Stay tuned for our March/April issue of LINK when we will do a deeper dive into rural development. We will be featuring guest columns from rural development organizations and government agencies IFB is proud to collaborate with to connect our members and rural communities with resources and expertise.

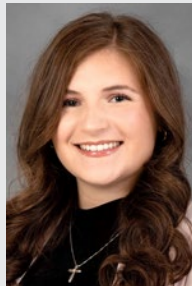
MANAGERS WELCOME

Welcome to a New Class of Think LINK Managers

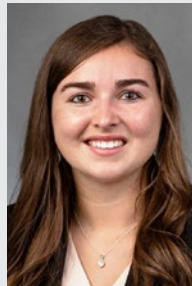
The Local Government Department is happy to welcome the new class of **Think LINK** participants!



Alexis Shreves



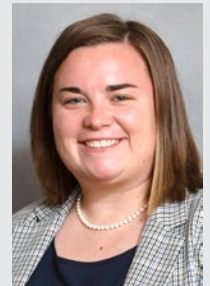
Grace Clark



Kacie Haag



Emily Iliff



Jenna Preston

- **Alexis Shreves**, Manager, Pulaski-Alexander and Massac County Farm Bureaus
- **Grace Clark**, Manager, Dewitt County Farm Bureau
- **Kacie Haag**, Manager, Lawrence County Farm Bureau
- **Emily Iliff**, Manager, Stark County Farm Bureau
- **Jenna Preston**, Manager, Mercer County Farm Bureau

This new cohort of Think LINK will continue to focus on local government. We will work with the managers to build awareness, experience and understanding of local issues, local government structure and authorities, and to help them engage with local officials in their county and community. Through this process, participants will become more comfortable with – thus more involved in – local government.

This new class represents the ninth group of managers to participate in Think LINK. Please offer them your congratulations.

GET OUT THE VOTE

A Primer on Upcoming Local Elections

On April 4, Illinois voters will go to the polls once again for the consolidated election featuring local races, including:

- Municipal offices (mayor, council members, trustees, etc.)
- Special purpose district offices such as park, fire, library, community college and school boards/trustees

Questions of public policy can also appear on the ballot.

A consolidated primary election might also be held in municipalities over 5,000 in population and those smaller than that which, by ordinance, have chosen to use the partisan approach. In some cases, a primary can be used to narrow down the nonpartisan field of candidates. The primary consolidated election will be held on Feb. 28.

The majority of local officials to be elected this spring run in nonpartisan races. The election for them – and for winners of the Feb. 28 primary races – will be held at the April 4 consolidated election.

Make a plan today to research candidates and questions of public policy and cast your vote to ensure your voice is heard this spring.

2023 PRIMARY DATES

Consolidated Primary - February 28

Date	Description
January 9	County clerks provide SBE with list of early voting sites and hours of operation
January 12	Early voting sites and hours of operation published by local election authority
January 19	Early voting begins, vote by mail ballots mailed
January 31	Regular voter registration ends
February 1	Grace period voter registration and voting begins
February 12	Online voter registration ends
February 23	Last day for vote by mail applications through mail
February 27	Last day for vote by mail applications in person, early voting ends
February 28	Election Day (6am – 7pm)

2023 LOCAL ELECTIONS

Consolidated Election - April 4

Date	Description
January 4	Vote by mail applications now accepted
February 23	Early voting begins, vote by mail ballots mailed
March 7	Regular voter registration ends
March 8	Grace period voter registration and voting begins
March 10	Early voting begins if a primary was held, vote by mail ballots mailed
March 19	Online voter registration ends
March 30	Last day for vote by mail applications through mail
April 3	Last day for vote by mail applications in person, early voting ends
April 4	Election Day (6am – 7pm)
April 18	Last day for vote by mail tabulation

