

The value of grassroots political action

Will Rogers once said, "Politics has gotten so expensive that it even takes a lot of money to get beat."

Regardless of whether we talk about Presidential, Congressional, state or local elections, one fact remains – elections cost a lot of money and their price will continue to escalate.

This is one reason political action committees (PACs) and associations like Kansas Farm Bureau play an important role in the political process. Working together, groups like ours support candidates who share our positions on issues important to not only farmers and ranchers, but every Kansan.

If we do not step up to the challenge of supporting candidates and issues we care about like holding the line on property taxes, landowners' rights and environmental regulation, we have no one to blame but ourselves when legislation is passed that weakens

our state's economy or candidates unsympathetic to our issues are elected.

Of all of the political organizations in the U.S., one – and only one – exists to further the goals of agriculture and strengthen Kansas. KFB's Voters Organized To Elect Farm Bureau Friends Fund (VOTE FBF) is the most important issue-mobilizing force protecting and promoting our goal of creating an environment in which farmers, ranchers and our families can prosper and grow.

This is why your elected farmer/rancher VOTE FBF board is launching an aggressive fund raising campaign in 2007. Watch future issues of your *Farm Leader Letter*, *Kansas Living* magazine and www.kfb.org, for more details on how you can make a difference.



Voters Organized To Elect Farm Bureau Friends

7th district says 'thank you'

Mitz Fawl and Sharilyn McNickle, along with other 7th district coordinators, gathered items to mail care packages to soldiers. Each package contained a letter of appreciation from the county Farm Bureau, a local newspaper, disposable camera, Farm Bureau lip balm, pen and notepad, candy, sunflower seeds, sports drinks, cereal treats, beef jerky, snacks, potato chips, a toothbrush, toothpaste and hand wipes.



KFB Calendar

January 26-28

YF&R Leaders Conference, Wichita

January 31-February 1

KFB Day at the Statehouse

February 4-10

Food Check-Out Week

February 6

Food Check-Out Day

February 8-10

AFBF Nat'l Leadership Conf., Jacksonville, FL

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
MANHATTAN KS 66502
PERMIT NO. 103

Kansas Farm Bureau
P.O. Box 3500
Manhattan, KS 66505

In this issue

✓ Money issues may dominate state legislature

✓ KFB works for disaster declaration after winter storm

✓ VOTE FBF begins fundraising campaign

Farm Leader Letter is a publication of Kansas Farm Bureau and is published twice each month.
Kansas Farm Bureau represents grassroots agriculture. Established in 1919, this non-profit advocacy organization supports farm families who earn their living in a changing industry.

Editor: Megan Cramer
E-mail: cramerm@kfb.org

Farm Leader *letter*

A publication of Kansas Farm Bureau

State legislature in session; money issues may dominate

The state legislature is back in session in Topeka, complete with new opportunities and new dangers. This year, the ballgame may hinge on money issues. Previously made financial commitments are coming due.

"They won't make the headlines, but often the most important work we do on behalf of our members is to stop bad ideas from gaining a foothold," said Brad Harrelson, KFB state policy director. "In any given legislative session, we play as much defense as we do offense. And a strong defense often wins the game."

The bills and invoices are starting to stack up in Topeka. Millions are needed for K-12 public education, government employee pensions, transportation obligations and state university infrastructure. Medicaid caseloads

are on the rise and dollars have been promised to local governments to reduce the impact of the tax exemption on business machinery and equipment passed last year.

Because of generations of heritage, legacy and positive economic impact, the men and women who earn their living and raise their families on the farm have earned a special place in the hearts and minds of policymakers – and in the economic infrastructure of Kansas.

In '07, KFB will advocate member-driven policy

- Government consolidation
- Definition of "blight" in eminent domain
- Holding the line on property taxes
- Renewable energy
- Farm driver's permit for 14-15 year olds
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

Just five minutes, twice a month

The new year brings a change in your Kansas Farm Bureau newsletter. The *Farm Leader Letter* has a new format for a very important reason. It now reaches the homes of every voting member of this organization. Nearly 40,000 strong.

The leadership of your farm organization feels strongly that if you care enough to belong, the least we can do is provide a twice-monthly, 5-minute read of the important work of your farm organization. If this is your first *Farm*

Leader Letter, we're confident you'll find it of value. If you're a longtime subscriber, we hope you like the new format.



Baccus

Regardless of the level of involvement with your farm organization, we're glad you belong and we're grateful for your dedication to agriculture

and preserving the heritage of rural Kansas.

*Steve Baccus, Ottawa County
President, Kansas Farm Bureau*

KFB
KANSAS FARM BUREAU
The Voice of Agriculture

Volume 24/Issue 1 • Jan. 12, 2007
www.kfb.org

KFB works government for disaster declaration

In an effort to aid Kansas farmers and ranchers coping with the aftermath of a massive New Years' Eve winter storm, KFB worked many avenues of government toward a goal of a federal disaster declaration.

Gov. Sebelius declared a state of disaster emergency for 44 western Kansas counties impacted by the storm. Many were left without electrical power and in some cases, the storm limited the ability to feed and water livestock.



Andrea Schneider, Greeley County FB member, provided this photo of a heifer covered in snow and ice near Tribune.

This particular storm was unlike a typical weather-related disaster assistance request in agriculture. Since the blizzard placed livestock animals at risk, other federal government agencies were required by statute to weigh in.

KFB delegation pushes member-adopted ideas

Consensus was reached on FB member-driven policy proposals when six members of Kansas Farm Bureau (elected by voting member delegates) took the floor with hundreds of their counterparts from every other state in the U.S. at the '07 Annual Meeting of the American Farm Bureau Federation, last week in Salt Lake City. Your KFB delegation, led by President Steve Baccus, Ottawa County, argued

Day at the Statehouse – lobbying, networking & free parking!

The tradition of Farm Bureau's annual legislative networking event, *Day at the Statehouse*, continues Jan. 31 and Feb. 1 in Topeka. The event provides KFB members the opportunity to meet state policymakers and advocate for member-driven policies beneficial to agriculture and rural Kansas.

Wednesday includes a briefing session with KFB lobbyists at the Capitol Plaza Hotel. New this year, an issue-surfacing forum will give members another chance to provide their input and concerns on policy-related matters that may arise in Topeka. A reception and

Because your KFB Governmental Relations staff is fluent in the process, they worked efficiently with the Kansas Congressional delegation to ensure the request correspondence was worded correctly to expedite the government decisions on disaster assistance. KFB also teamed with professional staff from the Colorado Farm Bureau and livestock-specific organizations to beef up the request.

Your farm organization was involved from the onset with staff participation in a New Years' Day conference call with the Kansas Department of Agriculture which led to the establishment of a hotline, (785) 274-1446, and website, www.ksready.gov, for livestock producers in need of emergency feed/water assistance.

for member-adopted 2007 farm bill language that would provide an adequate income safety net and reduce the need for ad hoc disaster assistance. The KFB delegation also pushed hard for an increased emphasis on rural development in the '07 farm bill.

Watch for more news from the meeting in your next *Farm Leader Letter* and at www.kfb.org.

dinner with state senators and representatives will follow. Gov. Sebelius has also been invited to speak. At breakfast Thursday morning, House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, Ingalls, and Senate President Steve Morris, Hugoton, will address the FB faithful. The new member-driven VOTE FBF fund raising effort will also be unveiled. Members can then travel to the Statehouse at their convenience (park free in the new underground lot on the north side) for committee hearings, legislative office visits and House and Senate sessions. For more information, contact KFB Governmental Relations staff at (785) 234-4535.

Farm flashes

KFB commodity tours

Kansas Farm Bureau is offering members two opportunities to get an inside look at commodities markets. The KFB Wheat Study Tour includes visits to the Kansas City Board of Trade and Washington D.C. The KFB Futures Market Tour includes stops at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and the Chicago Board of Trade. Tours of each market are mixed with educational seminars from market participants, regulators and commodity analysts. For more information, visit www.kfb.org/commodities/commoditiestours06.htm.

Food Check-Out Week

County and state Farm Bureaus will celebrate Food Check-Out Week the week of Feb. 4. The events mark the time of year when the average American family has earned enough income to pay for their family's annual food bill. Food Check-Out Day originated in 1997 with Neosho County FB member and former KFB women's committee chair, Linda Reinhardt.



New Century Farmer applications

Applications are being accepted for the 2007 New Century Farmer Program. It will be held on the Pioneer Johnston, Iowa, campus July 9-13, and includes extensive seminars on the latest in agricultural production. Application deadline is March 1. More information is available at www.ffa.org/programs/ncfarmer/index.html.

Pasture labeling safety project

Barton County FB has initiated a safety project called "Pasture Labeling." It is a tool that identifies stray livestock, reports to 911 and reaches owners in a shorter amount of time. Contact Barton County Farm Bureau at (620) 792-2236 or email bartonfb@kfb.org.

Women's management conference

KFB and others will sponsor a farm management conference for women on Feb. 9 and 10 in Hutchinson. "Moving Ag Women Forward," will focus on risk management and business strategies for effective farm management. The cost to attend the conference is \$65, if registration is received by Feb. 1. Information is available at 1-866-FARM-KSU or www.womenmanagingthefarm.info.

KFB members-only farm bill website

An online, "one-stop shop", with 2007 farm bill information has been created for KFB members. The new site, www.kfb.org/kfbmembers/farmbill07.htm, includes updates from KFB's Governmental Relations staff, proposed farm bill legislation, Senate and House hearings and testimony and USDA papers.



KFB message on statewide TV

Kansas Farm Bureau is proud to underwrite the longest running public affairs television series in the state. *Kansas Week* is the only consistent and comprehensive television program in the state dedicated to crucial policy developments, discussion and debate. *Kansas Week* airs Fridays at 7:30 p.m. CST on public TV. View the on-air KFB television messages at www.kfb.org.

Member discounts continue

Discounts from various vendors continue for KFB members in 2007. Subscription rates to the *High Plains Journal* include one year at \$54 (regularly \$64); two years at \$100 (regularly \$128); and five years at \$225 (regularly \$320). Grainger Industrial Supplies provides a minimum 10 percent discount to FB members, hand tool and power tool discounts, and free shipping on all web orders. Members should use discount code 818062481 on www.grainger.com.



Right to farm

Why do we have right-to-farm laws? As the population of our nation grew into traditionally rural areas, the potential for land-use conflicts greatly increased. New rural residents often did not understand farming. Conflicts soon arose. The new neighbors objected to the animal smells, dust, noises, spraying of farm chemicals and slow-moving tractors that were generated from day-to-day farming practices. This created an atmosphere in which farmers were subjected to nuisance suits, and the application of local regulations that attempted to restrict their agricultural activities.

If neighboring landowners brought a lawsuit against an agricultural operation and it was found to be a nuisance, courts had the option of closing the operation, altering the way it conducted its business, or assessing penalties to compensate the neighboring landowner for the nuisance. Sometimes, the cost alone of defending against the suit could threaten or close the operation. To protect farmers from these nuisance suits, states enacted "right-to-farm" laws in the 1970s. These were intended to protect pre-existing agricultural operations. By the 1990s, virtually all states had approved this kind of protection.

Next time, we will explore what protection is provided and whether it is an absolute safeguard. For more information, contact either Mike Irvin, director of the KFB Legal Foundation, at (785) 587-6621 or Terry Arthur, KFB general counsel, at (785) 587-6614. For specific situations, consult a lawyer.

'07 YF&R Leaders Conference

More than 300 young farmers and ranchers are expected at the 2007 YF&R Leaders Conference Jan. 26-28 at the Hyatt Regency in Wichita.

Speakers include rural community activist and Montana logger, Bruce Vincent, and legendary coach of the K-State Wildcat football team, Bill Snyder.



Workshops and discussion topics include renewable energy, leadership lessons, teaching young people about agriculture, 2007 farm bill, rural community activism, farm management issues and resources, agritourism and effective lobbying techniques. The popular "Taste of Kansas" reception will also be offered again this year.

Information is available at www.kfb.org/yfr/conference.htm or through your county Farm Bureau office.

P&E committee created

The Kansas Farm Bureau Board of Directors created a new KFB Promotion and Ag Education Committee (P&E) at their December board of directors meeting.

"In order to create awareness and understanding and to promote the importance and values of Farm Bureau and agriculture to consumers and the country, we intend to tap the passion of these committee members to tell that story," Steve Baccus, KFB president, said.

The new committee will be one of KFB's four standing committees, taking the place of the current Membership and Promotion Committee.

"This committee will be instrumental in promoting agriculture and Farm Bureau to the children, the consumer public and to the producers of our state," Baccus said.