



 **MICHIGAN
FARM BUREAU®**

ELECTIONS HANDBOOK



Help Elect Friends of Agriculture

Once Michigan Farm Bureau AgriPac makes endorsements, the work is not done — the organization's focus shifts to helping our AgriPac-endorsed candidates get elected. This handbook provides rules and recommendations for ways county Farm Bureaus and individual members can help elect Friends of Agriculture.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Legal Limitations for County Farm Bureaus..... 4

- **Frequently Asked Questions 5**

Strategies to Help Elect Friends of Agriculture 6

- **Social Media Strategies..... 8**

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LEGAL LIMITATIONS FOR COUNTY FARM BUREAUS

- The county Farm Bureau **can** recommend that its members vote for Friends of Agriculture in communications with the county Farm Bureau membership and others (see FAQ #7 on page 5).
- The county Farm Bureau **cannot** make either a financial contribution or an in-kind contribution to any political candidate. (An *in-kind contribution* is any activity in support of a candidate which may have a value or cost attributed to it, such as meals, giveaway items, employee time, etc.).
- The county Farm Bureau **cannot** mail a candidate's campaign literature to the county Farm Bureau membership without charging the candidate for all incurred costs, but it **can** suggest that a candidate use the Michigan Farm Bureau Print Shop to do such a mailing (at the candidate's expense).
- The county Farm Bureau **cannot** pay for its members to attend fundraisers.
- The county Farm Bureau **cannot** have its employees provide assistance to candidates during company employment time.
- The county Farm Bureau **can** allow members to use offices and phones to aid in political activities on behalf of Friends of Agriculture.

Note: Many political activities that cannot be undertaken by the county Farm Bureau can nevertheless be undertaken by individual members. For example, individual members could purchase logo-screened golf balls and donate them directly to a candidate. Good ideas can be modified to comply with legal limitations.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can a county Farm Bureau waive the price of the County Annual Meeting dinner for a candidate?

The county Farm Bureau should treat candidates like any member of the public — if it charges a fee to other attendees for the County Annual Meeting dinner, it must also charge the candidate.

2. Can a county Farm Bureau put a candidate's sign on county Farm Bureau property?

Yes, but the county Farm Bureau should check with any landlord or other tenants if it is not the sole owner and occupant of the property.

3. Can a county Farm Bureau use its funds to help a candidate financially?

In general — no. The county Farm Bureau is a corporation, and it is not legal for corporations to directly contribute to a candidate's campaign. However, Michigan Farm Bureau has established FarmPAC — a "superPAC" which can accept county Farm Bureau funds and support candidates indirectly.

4. Can the county Farm Bureau hold a fundraiser for a candidate?

No, however, a member of the county Farm Bureau could conduct such a fundraiser at their farm (subject to reporting the costs if more than \$100).

5. Jon Doe, a candidate endorsed by AgriPac, wants to send campaign postcards to our members using the county mailing list. Is this permissible?

Legally, this is allowable as long as the candidate pays all costs, and the county Farm Bureau does not give its mailing list to the candidate. The easiest way to meet these requirements is for the candidate to hire the Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) Print Shop to do the mailing, thus safeguarding the mailing list. For additional information regarding campaign mailings through the MFB Print Shop, candidates should contact printngsrv@fbinsmi.com.

6. How does the 2010 Supreme Court ruling in Citizens United affect a county Farm Bureau's involvement in campaign finance?

This ruling paved the way for "superPACs" to accept corporate funds and use those funds for campaign ads. Michigan Farm Bureau has established FarmPAC, which can accept county Farm Bureau donations as well as donations from other corporations and individuals.

7. How can a county Farm Bureau communicate the AgriPac endorsements to its members?

A county Farm Bureau is allowed to spend money to tell its own members about the AgriPac endorsements. The county Farm Bureau can send postcards to its members and announce the endorsements on its website or social media accounts. It cannot include links to candidates' websites or social media accounts. See the **Social Media Strategies** section on pages 8-11 for more do's and don'ts.

8. Can a county Farm Bureau communicate the AgriPac endorsements to non-members, such as in a newspaper advertisement?

Yes, but this is regulated. The county Farm Bureau may be required to file a report of the expenditure, so please first consult with Michigan Farm Bureau elections specialist Matt Kapp.

STRATEGIES TO HELP ELECT FRIENDS OF AGRICULTURE

Encourage Members to Vote

Promote the importance of voting...

- In county Farm Bureau communications, such as a county Farm Bureau newsletter or article on the county website.
- On social media accounts, such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.
- At county Farm Bureau events or activities, such as the County Annual Meeting or Young Farmer Discussion Meet.
- By direct communication to members via email or mailing.



Make Sure Members are Registered to Vote

- Have mail-in voter registration applications available in county Farm Bureau offices and Farm Bureau Insurance agent offices.
- Include information on how to register to vote in county Farm Bureau communications such as a county newsletter or article on the county website.
- Send direct communication to members via email or mailing. Consider targeting a specific age group such as Young Farmers. For example, the county Farm Bureau could send an email to all Young Farmers encouraging them to be registered voters.



Promote Absentee Ballot Voting

- Due to the passage of the statewide ballot proposal 3 of 2018, all eligible and registered voters in Michigan may now request an absentee voter ballot without providing a reason.
- Have absentee ballot applications available in the county Farm Bureau office.
- Include information on how to vote absentee in county Farm Bureau communications.



Communicate With Members About Friends of Agriculture

The county Farm Bureau can:

- Communicate with their members by email.
- Contact members by phone.
- Mail a postcard to its membership identifying Friends of Agriculture and encouraging members to vote for these candidates.
- Include AgriPac endorsement information in county communications.



Send a Candidate Mailing

An endorsed candidate may ask the county Farm Bureau if they can mail campaign literature to members. For example, some candidates have asked if they can mail literature explaining their positions on agricultural issues to Farm Bureau members. This is allowed if:

- The county Farm Bureau board of directors approves the use of their mailing list.
- The candidate picks up all costs for the mailing.
- The candidate hires the Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) Print Shop for printing and mailing. If the MFB Print Shop conducts the mailing, candidates have the opportunity to mail to Farm Bureau members without having access to our mailing list.



Display Candidate Yard Signs

- Have yard signs of endorsed candidates available for members to pick up in the county Farm Bureau office.
- Have yard signs of endorsed candidates available at events — such as the County Annual Meeting — for members to pick up.
- Assemble a group of members to place signs on the property of members who are in key locations throughout the county.



Note: The county Farm Bureau needs to check city/township ordinances for political sign restrictions for sign placement (such as distance, size, height and time that signs can be displayed).

Host a Meet the Candidate Meeting or Event

- The county Farm Bureau could host a meeting or event where members can meet AgriPac-endorsed candidates.
- If agenda time allows, give endorsed candidates a brief amount of time to speak at your County Annual Meeting.
- In the past, some county Farm Bureaus have hosted Meet the Candidate events where all candidates, regardless of an endorsement, are invited. **County Farm Bureaus are strongly encouraged to only invite Agripac-endorsed candidates.** Why would we give non-endorsed candidates exposure to our membership?



Note: County Farm Bureaus may host a meeting or event for members to meet AgriPac-endorsed candidates. If the county Farm Bureau opens the meeting to non-members, it would need to charge the candidates for all costs of the event.

Encourage a Member to Host a Candidate Fundraiser

County Farm Bureaus cannot host candidate fundraisers but they can encourage individual members to host a fundraiser.

Social Media Strategies

Like/Follow Friends of Agriculture

Individual Farm Bureau members are encouraged to like/follow the social media networks of Friends of Agriculture and urge others to do the same.



- Make sure you like/follow the correct social media account! Often, a combination of personal and professional results might appear along with accounts created from past political campaigns. To find the candidate's current account:
 - Look for verified accounts — typically denoted by a blue badge with a checkmark symbol — and/or open and view the accounts to determine which one is the newest. Look for the account with the most recent updates and most followers.
 - Go online and search for the candidate's website, where politicians frequently provide links to their social media accounts.



County Farm Bureaus should avoid this practice on their social networks, as it could be deemed coordinated communications per elections laws. However, it's permissible for members on their personal social media accounts.

Share AgriPac News Releases

Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) issues statewide news releases announcing AgriPac's election endorsements. Under special circumstances, MFB may also distribute local press releases and/or run articles profiling candidates in the *Michigan Farm News* digital publication. County Farm Bureaus and individual members are encouraged to share these MFB-issued materials on social media, customizing their messages to focus on candidates from their area.



Per election laws, county Farm Bureaus should not share any news releases issued by candidates on their county's social media accounts to avoid what could be deemed coordinated communications. Individual members are allowed and encouraged to share the press release on their personal social media accounts.

Tag/Mention Candidates in Posts

When talking about Friends of Agriculture, be sure to tag/mention the candidate's official social media accounts, if applicable, in your posts. This will notify the individual of your action and help draw attention to the candidate by creating an active hyperlink to the tagged/mentioned social media account.



- Make sure you tag/mention the correct social media account—see the Like/follow Friends of Agriculture section above for pointers.



County Farm Bureaus should avoid this practice on their social networks, as it could be deemed coordinated communications per elections laws. However, it's permissible for members on their personal social media accounts.

Post Photos and Videos of Volunteer Activities

No matter the social media platform, photos and videos tend to attract the most engagement in terms of likes, comments and shares. So, take pictures and videos — lots of them — if you aren't already, and start posting!

- Social media users enjoy seeing other people they know in pictures and videos, so look for opportunities to include as many Farm Bureau members as you can. Having the candidate included is preferable but not always necessary.
- Photo and video ops are limitless and can run the gamut from the presentation of campaign contributions to on-farm political rallies and volunteers in action.



County Farm Bureaus should avoid reposting photos or videos that a candidate's campaign created or posted as it could be deemed a coordinated communication. However, we encourage county Farm Bureaus or members to post and share photos and videos that were taken or created by county Farm Bureau members.

Amplify 'Get Out the Vote'

Michigan Farm Bureau's "Get Out the Vote" message is twofold but simple. Counties and members are asked to:

1. Encourage voters to go to the polls; and
2. Urge voters to help elect Friends of Agriculture by voting for AgriPac-endorsed candidates.



The Farm Bureau membership can provide an invaluable service throughout the campaign season — on both personal and county-level social media accounts — by reminding voters of important deadlines, voting center hours of operation, etc.

Give it a "follow the leader" tone and spur others to take action! Ideas for content include:

- Suggestions and reminders to apply for absentee ballots
- Information and reminders about voter registration
- Link to the AgriPac webpage for endorsement information
- Instructions on obtaining political yard signs or creative uses of them
- Volunteer opportunities to assist campaign phone banks, etc.
- Information about the nearest voting centers and hours of operation
- Offers of rides to the polls or information about such services
- Last-minute reminders to vote

Share Positive News Coverage

Share positive news coverage of your Friends of Agriculture — especially if it's by an influential and trusted source in your area. As with sharing Michigan Farm Bureau news releases, it's best to supplement a shared link with a customized message that speaks more directly about the personal support behind the candidate.



Engage with a Candidate

Individual Farm Bureau members are encouraged to engage with Friends of Agriculture through their personal social media accounts. This includes liking, sharing/retweeting and commenting on candidates' posts; RSVPing to events and checking in to event locations; using official campaign hashtags; donating to a candidate's online fundraising efforts, etc.



County Farm Bureaus should avoid these social media practices, as they could be deemed coordinated communications per elections laws. They are, however, permissible for individual members on their personal social media accounts.

Spotlight Political Events

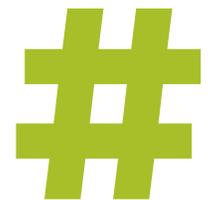
Individuals are free — and encouraged — to share information about candidates' political events (Farm Bureau-affiliated or otherwise) through their personal social media accounts. County Farm Bureaus, however, should keep event coverage limited to activities solely organized and facilitated by the county Farm Bureau to avoid a potential conflict with election laws, which prohibit coordinated communications. This includes all pre-, live and post-event promotion.



To avoid the appearance of coordinated communications and a potential conflict with elections laws, county Farm Bureaus should exercise caution when promoting candidates' political events on social media, limiting event coverage to activities solely organized and facilitated by the county Farm Bureau — not a campaign. Individual members are not bound by the same rules.

Use Hashtags Effectively

Hashtags are words or phrases preceded by a hash or pound sign (#) used to identify messages about specific topics on social media. Their use is commonplace and most effective on social media platforms with limited or little text, such as Twitter and Instagram, although other platforms such as Facebook have adopted the practice.



- Michigan Farm Bureau typically uses #AgriPac or #AgriPac[year] — for example, #AgriPac2022 — as hashtags on social media. Other more universally recognized hashtags are often incorporated, too, such as #Election and #ElectionDay.
- Candidates may introduce their own campaign hashtags, such as #SchuetteonDuty and #ReinventMichigan. Individuals are encouraged to integrate these campaign hashtags, where applicable, in addition to those used by Michigan Farm Bureau. County Farm Bureaus, however, should refrain from the practice to comply with election laws.
- As a rule of thumb, social media posts with a few meaningful hashtags generate more user engagement than messages cluttered with them. In other words, don't overdo it!



County Farm Bureaus should refrain from using a candidate's campaign hashtags, per election laws, to avoid the appearance of coordinated communications. Individual members are allowed and encouraged to use them on their personal social media accounts.

Communicate Post-Election

Don't forget to engage with candidates and fellow voters post-election using the tactics already outlined. Following are content suggestions:



- The county Farm Bureau and individual members should congratulate winning Friends of Agriculture on social media accounts, adding a customized message of how the county/or member looks forward to working with the candidate to implement Michigan Farm Bureau policy.
- Share Michigan Farm Bureau's post-election news coverage, which normally includes a press release summarizing how endorsed candidates fared. Be sure to thank everyone who voted and helped elect Friends of Agriculture. Customize with an added message about the importance of having people in office who understand and are receptive to the opportunities and challenges facing Michigan's agriculture industry.
- Acknowledge and thank local members for their voluntary time and efforts (financial and otherwise) in supporting campaigns for Friends of Agriculture.

For social media assistance, contact Michigan Farm Bureau digital editor Tony Hansen at thansen@michfb.com.

