


ELECTIONS *Handbook*



LEARN HOW YOU
CAN HELP ELECT
FRIENDS OF AGRICULTURE !

 **2018**



PURPOSE

Once Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) AgriPac makes endorsements, the work is not done, it shifts to Farm Bureau working hard to help elect our AgriPac endorsed candidates.

This handbook is designed for county Farm Bureau (CFB) activities that occur with candidates after AgriPac endorsements have been announced. The purpose of this handbook is to give county Farm Bureaus ideas on how they can help elect Friends of Agriculture.

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 3).
- 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 MFB Print Shop to do such a mailing (at the candidate’s expense).
- 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.
- The county cannot pay for its members to attend fundraisers.
- The county cannot have its employees provide assistance to candidates during company employment time.
- The county can allow members to use offices and phones to aid in political activities on behalf of Friends of Agriculture.

LEGAL LIMITATIONS---

Frequently Asked Questions

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

The CFB should treat candidates like any member of the public—if it charges a fee for the 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 CFB 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?

No, in general. The CFB 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 CFB funds and support candidates indirectly.



4. Can the CFB hold a fundraiser for a candidate?

No, however, a member of the CFB 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 CFB does not give its mailing list to the candidate. The easiest way to meet these requirements is for the candidate to hire the MFB Print Shop to do the mailing, thus safeguarding the mailing list. They can contact Karen Meyers at printngsrv@fbinsmi.com, if they do want to work with the Print Shop.

6. How does the 2010 Supreme Court ruling in Citizens United affect a CFB’s involvement in campaign finance?

This ruling paved the way for “superPACs” to accept corporate funds and use those funds for campaign ads. MFB has established FarmPAC, which can accept CFB donations as well as donations from other corporations and individuals.

7. How can a CFB communicate the AgriPac endorsements to its members?

A CFB is allowed to spend money to tell its own members about the AgriPac endorsements. The CFB can send postcards to its members and announce the endorsements on its website or social media. It cannot include links to the candidate’s own website or social media. See the Social Media Strategies Sections (Pages 8-16) for do’s and don’t’s.

8. Can a CFB communicate the AgriPac endorsements to nonmembers, such as in a newspaper ad?

Yes, but this is regulated. It may require that the CFB file a report of the expenditure, so please first consult with MFB elections specialist Matt Kapp.

ENCOURAGE MEMBERS TO VOTE

Promote the importance of voting

- In county Farm Bureau publications such as the county Farm Bureau newsletter, on Facebook, twitter, etc.
- At county Farm Bureau events/activities such as young farmer events, county annual, etc.
- By email



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.
- Have information on how to register to vote in county publications such as the county newsletter.
- Consider targeting a specific age group such as Young Farmers. For example, the county Farm Bureau could send an email to Young Farmers encouraging them to be registered voters.



PROMOTE ABSENTEE BALLOT VOTING

- A registered voter may obtain an absent voter ballot if he/she is age 60 years old or older, unable to vote without assistance at the polls, expecting to be out of town on election day, in jail awaiting arraignment or trial, unable to attend the polls due to religious reasons, or appointed to work as an election inspector in a precinct outside of his/her precinct of residence.
- Have absentee ballot applications available in the county office.
- Include information on how to vote absentee in your county newsletter.

COMMUNICATE WITH MEMBERS ABOUT FRIENDS OF AGRICULTURE

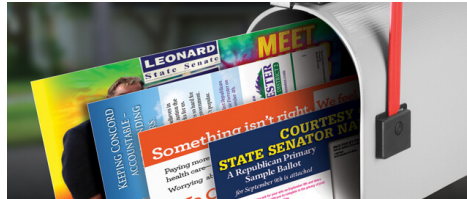
The county Farm Bureau can:

- Communicate by e-mail with their members.
- Contact members by phone .
- Mail a postcard to its membership identifying "Friends of Agriculture" and encourage members to vote for these candidates.
- Include AgriPac endorsement information in the county newsletter .



CANDIDATE MAILINGS

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



This can be allowed if:

- The CFB board of directors approves the use of their mailing list.
- The candidate picks up all costs for the mailing.
- The candidate hires the MFB Print Shop for printing & mailing. If the MFB Print Shop conducts the mailing, this gives candidates an opportunity to mail to FB members but NOT give them access to our mailing list.

YARD SIGNS

- Have signs of endorsed candidates available for members to pick up in the county office.
- Have signs available at events, such as 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).



MEET THE CANDIDATE EVENTS

- The CFB could host a meeting where members can meet AgriPac endorsed candidates.
- If agenda time allows, give endorsed candidates a brief amount of time to speak at county annual meetings.
- In the past, some CFBs have hosted meet-the-candidate events where all candidates, regardless of an endorsement, are invited. CFBs are strongly encouraged to only invite endorsed candidates. Why would we give non endorsed exposure to our membership?

Note: County Farm Bureaus may conduct a meeting of only AgriPac endorsed candidates for the county Farm Bureau membership to attend for the purpose of meeting these candidates. If the county Farm Bureau opened the meeting to people other than membership, the county Farm Bureau would need to charge the candidates for all costs of the event.



Members meet with Lawmakers at a Legislative Breakfast

Legislators, left to right, Phil Potvin, Darwin Booher, John Moolenaar, Judy Emmons and Joel Johnson spoke to Farm Bureau members.

FUNDRAISERS

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

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES TO HELP ELECT FRIENDS OF AGRICULTURE

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. Solutions:
 - Look for verified accounts and/or open and view the accounts to determine which one is the newest — usually recognizable because it has 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 platforms.

SHARE AGRIPAC NEWS RELEASES

MFB issues statewide news releases announcing AgriPac's election endorsements. Under special circumstances, MFB may also distribute local press releases and the Michigan Farm News (digital MI Farm News) might run a series profiling certain candidates. County Farm Bureaus and individual members are encouraged to share these materials, customizing their messages to focus on candidates from their area.

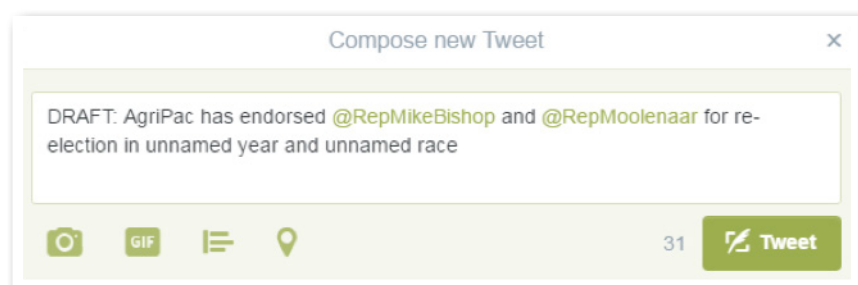


Per election laws, county Farm Bureaus should not share news releases issued by candidates about earning AgriPac's endorsement on their county's social media sites to avoid what could be deemed coordinated communications. Individual members are allowed and encouraged to share the press release on their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

TAG/MENTION CANDIDATES

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 person's candidacy by creating an active hyperlink to the tagged/mentioned social media account.

- Make sure you tag/mention the correct social media account! Often, a combination of personal and professional results might appear along with accounts created from past political campaigns. See the *Like/follow Friends of Agriculture* section for pointers on choosing the right one.



- Consult your social media provider's help section for instructions if you're unfamiliar with how to tag or mention another user's social media account.



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 platforms.

POST PICS OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

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

- Social media users enjoy seeing other people they know in pictures, 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 ops are limitless and can run the gamut from the presentation of campaign contributions to on-farm political rallies and volunteers in action.



AMPLIFY ‘GET OUT THE VOTE’

MFB’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 [Insert AgriPac-endorsed candidate name(s)].

The Farm Bureau membership can provide an invaluable service throughout the campaign season — on both personal and county-level social media sites — 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 follow:

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



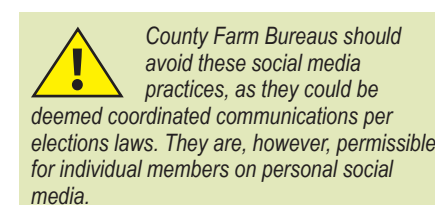
SHARE POSITIVE NEWS COVERAGE

Outside of Farm Bureau, share positive news coverage of your Friend of Agriculture — especially if it’s by an influential and trusted source in your area. As with sharing MFB 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

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



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 networks. 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.

Michigan Farm Bureau added 3 new photos
Published by Jill Hester Conn on October 12, 2014

The Ottawa County Farm Bureau on Saturday hosted a campaign event for Terri Lynn Land, the AgriPac-endorsed Friend of Agriculture running for U.S. Senate. Farm Bureau members gathered at Burns Equipment in Coopersville where U.S. Rep. Bill Huelsenga, a fellow AgriPac-endorsed Friend of Agriculture running for re-election, and several other state officials also spoke.

! 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 to the same rules.

Michigan Farm Bureau
October 26, 2010

Now showing: Video from Rick Snyder's tour of a Jackson County farm. Learn why Snyder is "fired up" to get to Lansing -- WITH YOUR VOTE -- and more on why he chose Brian Calley as his running mate. Plus, hear some thoughtful remarks from the farm host, Hank Choate.

Agri Pac Endorsed Rick Snyder Visits Choate Family Farm.
Michigan gubernatorial candidate Rick Snyder visited Hank Choate's Belly Acres Farm near Cement City on Monday October 25th, 2010. Endorsed by Michigan...

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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.

- MFB often uses #AgriPac or #AgriPac[year], for example #AgriPac2016, as hashtags on microblogging networks like Twitter. 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 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!
- If you're unfamiliar with hashtags, consult your social media provider's help section for instructions on how to create and search for popular and trending hashtags.



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

COMMUNICATE POST-ELECTION

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

- Congratulate Friend of Agriculture winners on county Farm Bureau and members' personal social media accounts, adding a customized message of how the county and/or member looks forward to working with the candidate to implement MFB policy. Individuals can go a step further and also communicate directly with a candidate's social media accounts; for example, post a comment to the winner's Facebook page.
- Share MFB'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.



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- Postcards
- Recommendation forms