



2019 RESOLUTIONS

Adopted December 4, 2018

TENNESSEE FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

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Commodity Highlight:
Tennessee's poultry industry has an overall economic
impact over \$6 billion.

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FOREWORD

The 2018 Annual Convention of the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation adopted the resolutions which will guide the organization until modified by the voting delegates. Resolutions on national and international matters are recommendations to the American Farm Bureau Federation. All legislative and public policy activities of the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation in 2019 will be based on these resolutions. Resolutions adopted at the American Farm Bureau Federation Convention will also guide the Federation.

County Farm Bureau resolutions committees and voting delegates at the state Farm Bureau Annual Convention have developed these policies through the democratic process of active membership participation in discussion and debate. They represent the best thought and judgment of the Farm Bureau membership in the 95 counties in Tennessee.

I - FARM BUREAU MEMBERSHIP

In 2018, the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation maintained over 671,000 family memberships. Special thanks go to dedicated volunteer leaders throughout Farm Bureau who give their time and talents so generously.

Membership proves that Farm Bureau families in Tennessee have confidence in the organization and its programs. The expansion of service programs shows that Farm Bureau works to meet the needs of farmers. We take every opportunity to be of further service to members.

This organization must have an active, informed membership. We encourage county Farm Bureau leaders to exert every effort to acquaint members with Farm Bureau policies and programs. Active direction will provide the programs and services Farm Bureau members need.

Participation in Farm Bureau by active farmers is important if our policy is to represent the best thoughts and beliefs of the farm community. We encourage each County Farm Bureau to strive to involve active, respected farm leaders in their county organization. Strong leaders build a strong organization.

PHILOSOPHY

The greatness of America is based on the freedom and dignity of the individual, sustained by basic moral and religious concepts. We state our belief that freedom of the individual, versus concentration of power that would destroy that freedom, is the central issue in all societies. When men and women are free, responsible individuals, economic progress, cultural advancement, and ethical and religious principles flourish.

The exercise of free will by individuals, rather than force exercised by government or groups of individuals, is necessary to maintain liberty.

National security is of utmost importance for the safety of U. S. citizens. However, the pursuit of guaranteed security should be balanced to avoid repressing individual freedoms.

We reaffirm our belief that individual freedom is secured through the following concepts and actions:

The strength of this nation is derived from the family dedicated to, and living, the principles taught by Jesus as recorded in the Bible for all people to accept or reject. Farm Bureau encourages everyone to understand their place and responsibility in the home and in living and encouraging others to live by these Christian principles.

We believe in the representative form of government - a republic - as provided in our Constitution; in limitations of government power; in maintenance of equal opportunity; in the right of each individual to worship as he chooses; in separation of church

and state; and in freedom of speech, press and peaceful assembly.

The Constitution of the United States was designed to secure individual liberty by a division of authority among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. We believe in the diffusion of government powers and that the federal government only has those powers specifically delegated in the Constitution. All other powers are retained by the states and the people.

Congress must assume its constitutional responsibility to preserve our federal system by reversing, not furthering, the trend toward centralization of authority in the executive and judicial branches. We are opposed to federal programs used as vehicles to force state and local governments to conform to federal authority. We oppose the use of government-financed agencies, organizations, or committees to develop policy and promote legislation.

We believe in an independent judiciary, impartial administration of the law without special privilege, and government by law rather than by men. The Supreme Court should confine itself to interpretations of the Constitution and refrain from legislating by decree. A definite length of term should be set for all judges who are now appointed for life terms.

The maintenance of strong, independent and responsible state and local governments is necessary to the preservation of self-government and individual freedoms. We are opposed to the concept of regional governments.

We believe in the competitive American free enterprise system. Property rights are essential to the preservation of individual freedom. Most property should be privately owned, privately managed, and operated for profit.

We believe in the right of everyone to choose their own occupation; to be rewarded according to their contribution to society; and to save, invest, spend, or convey assets to their heirs. These rights are accompanied by the responsibility each person has individually, and each generation has collectively, to meet financial obligations incurred.

Each individual has a responsibility to help preserve freedom for future generations by participating in public affairs and by helping to elect public officials who share these fundamental beliefs and principles.

No government agency should have the power to interpret the laws to enhance its own power or force undue hardships on innocent individuals.

SERVICE PROGRAMS

Farmers organized the Farm Bureau to be the voice of agriculture and provide its members with economic and public service programs.

The service programs of the Tennessee Farm Bureau are managed well and are financially sound. Services that respond to the needs of the membership provide stability and growth to the organization. The Board of Directors must continue to operate our service programs professionally. In responding to membership needs, leaders of the organization should explore new opportunities for service to members.

We commend our Farm Bureau agency personnel for their efforts in attracting, servicing and retaining Farm Bureau members. They are often the liaison between the farm community and the general public and have served both the farm community and the Federation well.

The Board of Directors must monitor legislative developments that influence Farm Bureau services to members. We support laws that enhance the operation of Farm Bureau service companies. We oppose legislative efforts that bring undue hardship upon our service programs and have an adverse effect on Farm Bureau members.

AGRICULTURAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Tennessee Farm Bureau serves as a voice of Tennessee agriculture in public life. We help farmers communicate with each other and with the rest of society. Through Farm Bureau, farmers learn of common problems and of good solutions. We help each other better understand the way our activities support the economic and civic life of the nation.

Farm Bureau also must explain farming to our neighbors who do not farm. The organization creates a better public understanding of the contribution farmers make to our economy. Farm Bureau offers training for those individuals wishing to learn more about the ways they can tell their story.

The best speakers for agriculture are professional farm men, women, and young farmers. These farmers should work to improve awareness of Farm Bureau's mission. County Farm Bureaus encourage individual contacts between farm and non-farm families. Greater understanding of agriculture and a better appreciation of farmers is the result.

Farmers have a favorable public image. By producing food and fiber in safe and environmentally sound ways, farmers are essential to society. Responsible farmers make a conscious effort to improve their communities. We thank those who have contributed to this better understanding and good image.

We believe an opportunity exists to showcase to the public the excellence of Tennessee agriculture. Millions drive by outstanding producers' operations each day on our public highways. We encourage our state board to study options to capture this audience and find the best ways to build awareness upon the importance of agriculture. A great confidence in the stewardship of farmers can be developed. Technology, branding and marketing opportunities could lead to the public's connection to agriculture and the excellent resources that it has to offer consumers of Tennessee.

Many of the issues facing today's farmers are extremely technical and complex. These issues have the potential of quickly becoming highly volatile, resulting in a negative public image and potential damage to farmers and their markets.

The Tennessee Farm Bureau should have the ability to quickly address these issues whether in the media, in public appearances or in the courtroom. The public must be assured the agricultural community is acting in a responsible manner.

The Farm Bureau news media must lead in responsible farm journalism. Scientific research and wise public policy should form the basis of media presentations. The national debate on food safety, animal welfare, water quality, biotechnology and wetlands protection are examples of issues being distorted by sensationalism. Every available medium should be used to effectively present the agricultural message. Agricultural alliances should be encouraged to strengthen our position by involving all facets of the agricultural community. We encourage further expansion of media resources and the TFBF Public Policy Division.

Farmers and their organizations must explain to the public the positive effects of farm science and technology. Everyone gains from good public agricultural policy.

Farmers in today's society are vulnerable to many aggressive actions resulting in the necessity of obtaining legal defense. Condemnation of land, nuisance lawsuits, migrant labor regulations and environmental regulations such as those dealing with wetlands, water quality, biotechnology and endangered species are just a few examples of areas where farmers sometimes need legal help. We encourage friends of agriculture to contribute in a cooperative effort in effective public relations for Tennessee agriculture.

We recommend Farm Bureau support increasing the use of media to promote the image of agriculture through the use of cooperative advertising by linking with ag businesses and commodity groups. The public relations activities of the Farm and Forest Families of Tennessee is the type of advertising campaign the agri-

cultural community needs. Such advertising should only be used to promote agriculture and not any particular organization or business.

Fifteen percent of American households were food insecure at least some time during the past year. We are proud of the efforts of Tennessee Young Farmers and Ranchers and the Farm Bureau Women to help people in need through their efforts with Second Harvest Food Bank. In addition, our partnership in the "Shooting Hunger" event with Farm Credit Mid-America and the Tennessee Farmers CO-OP is also helping those in need.

We urge continued use of the Internet, cable TV and other public access venues. School children need to know how each commodity and farm organization fits into their world.

We commend the Tennessee Farm Bureau Women for Farm-City activities, Agriculture in the Classroom, other youth programs, rural-urban visits, commodity programs, and county fair displays. All of these promote better understanding among farm and non-farm people. Each county Farm Bureau should appoint a media relations committee and work closely with local media.

To make vital decisions, farmers need detailed and timely weather information, local news, up-to-the minute market reports and news affecting production agriculture. We encourage all radio and television stations to maintain and improve their agricultural services.

AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM

The Tennessee Farm Bureau Ag in the Classroom program helps Agricultural Leaders show school children the importance of agriculture to our local, state, national, and worldwide economy. Through Agriculture in the Classroom programs, students, teachers, and parents learn how a strong farm economy builds a strong and peaceful nation and a strong American agriculture assures a plentiful, high-quality food supply and creates jobs for many Americans.

Agricultural volunteers, Tennessee Farm Bureau Women, & Tennessee Young Farmers provide Ag in the Classroom material to teachers, arrange for in-service workshops, serve as resource persons in the classroom, adopt classrooms, conduct field studies, and essay contests for fifth grade and Our Food Link (formerly Food Check-out). We complement those counties that have initiated the Teacher "Ag Ambassador" Program in local schools. We encourage each county Farm Bureau to sponsor at least one teacher from their county to attend an Ag in the Classroom workshop for teachers.

We thank the Tennessee Foundation for Ag in the Classroom and operating sponsors for their financial support and county Farm Bureaus for initiating and supporting the Endowment Fund and the Affinity Credit Card Program.

We urge all counties to take advantage of these opportunities to support agriculture literacy. Celebrating Agriculture Literacy Week annually serves multiple long term benefits. Reading about agriculture provides a foundation for young people's knowledge, understanding and appreciation of agriculture while also reinforcing the importance of literacy.

We commend the Agriculture in the Classroom Program, which has developed educational materials on agriculture for use in the school systems and encourage its acceptance in the curricula of all elementary and secondary schools, including home schools.

We support:

1. A continued partnership expansion with the State Department of Education and encourage each Tennessee school system to become more involved.
2. The National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization.
3. USDA's role as coordinator of the Agriculture in the Classroom program and the continuation of funding for the Annual National Conference, website maintenance and enhancement, Agriculture in the

Classroom Excellence Grants Program (ACE), Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture in the Classroom Award and the ability for state programs to apply for Secondary Education, Two-Year Postsecondary Education, and Agriculture in the K-12 Classroom Challenge (SPECA) Grants Program and additional programs as funding allows; and

4. An increase in the annual appropriation for the program.

We recommend the Tennessee Farm Bureau continue to expand an interactive curriculum of agriculture via the Internet.

YOUNG FARMERS AND RANCHERS

We commend Young Farmers and Ranchers (YF&R) for their participation in all Farm Bureau activities. YF&R members should help each other maintain their interest in agriculture and expand their farm production opportunities. YF&R members are essential to an effective Farm Bureau.

State and county Farm Bureaus and UT Extension must continue to provide counsel, guidance and support to young farmers. County Farm Bureaus should include young farmers on boards of directors, committees, and in other county activities. Volunteer leaders should help young farmers become aware of and benefit from leadership opportunities. Every county should appoint a Young Farmer Chairman and promote an active Young Farmer Committee.

If young people are to become Farm Bureau leaders, they need leadership opportunities and responsibilities.

Innovative and relevant YF&R programs attract potential leaders. We applaud awards presented to winners in the Discussion Meet, Young Farmer of the Year Achievement contests, Excellence in Agriculture Award, Environmental Stewardship Award, and the Outstanding Young Woman Award. Participation in these programs enhances strong leadership.

We support the use of awards in other programs to recognize outstanding young farmers and ranchers.

COMMODITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Commodity Advisory Committees serve as a valuable resource for Farm Bureau when commodity-specific issues surface and need attention. These committees should consist of professional farmers and experts within the agricultural industry involved in the business of producing specific commodities. All areas of the state where each commodity is produced should be represented.

The Tennessee Farm Bureau should strive to have maximum representation for Tennessee farmers in American Farm Bureau policy and decisions. Every feasible opportunity should be used to place Tennessee farmers on the American Farm Bureau Issue Advisory Committees.

CENTER FOR PROFITABLE AGRICULTURE

We applaud the partnership between the Tennessee Farm Bureau and the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture to support the Center for Profitable Agriculture. The goal of the Center is to provide educational programs and technical assistance to Tennessee farmers interested in value-added enterprises to improve farm income. The Center specializes in helping farm families and entrepreneurs with:

- Value-added financial analysis and development including cost-analysis, breakeven analysis and profit/loss analysis,
- Value-added market analysis and development including target market identification, sales estimates and pricing and promotion strategies and,

- Value-added technical analysis including product development, packaging, labeling and regulations.

Specialists in the Center assist Tennessee farmers in the evaluation and development of value-added agriculture enterprise through:

- Individual enterprise analysis,
- Educational workshops and conferences and,
- Educational publications and planning tools.

The Center shows year-to-year impact through increasing number of farmers considering and implementing value-added ideas and enterprises.

We are pleased with the leadership the Center for Profitable Agriculture has provided to value-added agriculture education and development in Tennessee since its inception in 1998. We support adequate funding of staff and resources needed to expand efforts of current and future programs. We are optimistic that this University of Tennessee - Farm Bureau partnership will continue to enhance farm income opportunities in our rural communities in the future.

II - BUDGET, TAXES AND TRADE ECONOMIC POLICY

A free market system makes our economy strong. People with the opportunity to build a good life by free choice drive our nation.

A sound economic future depends on increased productivity. American farmers are among the most productive members of our society. The United States needs to produce goods and services more efficiently. We need to stimulate more and better businesses and jobs. We support American based companies and encourage buying American made products.

The federal government continues to record annual deficits of over \$1 trillion. The President and the United States Congress must control federal spending, pay down debts, and maintain a balanced budget without weakening the economy. Spending restraint should be used to balance the federal budget each year. New or increased taxes should not be used. Sound economic policy and courageous leadership will help ailing businesses and governments more than bailouts.

Financial markets are important to farmers and other rural families. Overregulation of financial institutions could cause instability in the financial markets. We encourage restraint and caution in any legislation further regulating the banking industry.

We must avoid negative and counterproductive regulations that could have the unintended consequence of stifling productivity. Excessive government regulation and permitting processes are a major contributor to high unemployment.

Bureaucratic zealots are stifling economic growth using regulations, permitting processes, and harassment to drive business and jobs to other countries. We urge Congress to curb these practices and make America a business friendly country. Focusing on productivity will build a stronger economy over the long run and leave America better prepared to handle future economic downturns.

Constitutional restraints can restore fiscal responsibility at the federal level. We support a constitutional amendment requiring the federal government operate on a balanced budget each year. This amendment would limit the taxing and spending authority of the federal government. Even without a balanced budget amendment, Congress must reduce the federal debt quickly.

The public needs to know the causes of our major economic ills. Informed citizens can improve our economy and our government by demanding better performance of all those in public office. Companies establishing offshore offices for the purpose of tax avoidance must be held accountable.

More and more manufacturing and professional services are leaving our local communities because of increasing input costs and moving to low input cost countries. Agriculture is suffering

from the same increased input costs. Farm Bureau supports bringing American manufacturers back to the U.S.

The United States cannot afford to allow our regulatory, litigation, labor and other input costs to rise to the point our nation becomes vulnerable to economic blackmail. Our rural communities are suffering from the loss of jobs. We urge Congress to study ways we can lower our production costs and remain competitive worldwide.

Economic policy should promote more personal savings and less consumer debt.

An independent Federal Reserve System protects our monetary system, controls inflation and maintains the value of our money.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING LIMITATION

The federal government spends more money than it should. Much tax money is wasted. Therefore, all taxpayers must help by limiting the demands on government for services. Citizens must limit governmental authority to tax and spend. All governments need strong limits to free spending.

We oppose political action affiliates working with federal agencies for the benefit of the increased job justification for federal employees.

Government spending limits must be tied to economic growth except in times of national emergency. Government must eliminate obsolete programs, stop waste, fraud and abuse, and concentrate on providing essential services in the most productive manner. Farm Bureau should strive to inform our congressional delegation of any such cases.

The federal government often provides matching funds to states. States provide matching funds to local governments. The higher government often entices the lower to spend tax money it would not spend by choice. The result is too often local people believe they are forced to waste money. In addition, a growing trend has been for the higher government to impose unfunded mandates on the lower level of government.

Governments are not only placing unfunded mandates on other levels of government but also on farmers and businessmen.

INFLATION

When inflation erodes the buying power of the dollar, we suffer extensive and often subtle consequences. Inflation causes individuals to spend resources hedging against inflation instead of pursuing more productive activities. Governments feed inflation and waste when they impose costly regulations with little benefit to society. Efforts should be made to reduce excessive regulations and protectionist measures that can stifle fair competition. Governments and businesses must rely on increased productivity.

Wages should increase because of more efficient production, more attractive products and better marketing plans.

Many times, inflation is caused by decisions made by regulators who are rewarded for forcing compliance of unnecessary, unreasonable, unfeasible or unaffordable rules.

FOREIGN TRADE

The economic health of every nation depends upon mutually beneficial trade among nations. The United States must strengthen monetary and trade policies to promote fewer trade barriers between nations. Increasing international trade, especially in agricultural commodities, will benefit all of us.

Governments, organized labor, and others have restricted or boycotted the export of Agricultural products. We oppose such restrictions on agricultural exports. Embargoes damage farmers' confidence in the government, make our foreign customers doubt our

reliability, and force foreign buyers to secure supplies from other sources. Lost markets are difficult to regain. We oppose export curtailment by the Department of State for political purposes or the Department of Treasury for banking interests. Such actions cost both producers and consumers. We oppose actions that single out farm commodities as a tool to be used in international disputes.

Many imported items used in farm production are very important to farmers. Some are not available from domestic suppliers. Agricultural imports competing with products domestically produced or placing domestic markets in jeopardy should be dealt with through the United States International Trade Commission together with the Department of Agriculture. Imported agricultural commodities and value-added products should meet the same sanitary and quality standards as domestic products and should be labeled by country of origin.

We urge our negotiators in World Trade Organization (WTO) talks to place agricultural issues at a higher priority. These negotiators should be reporting to Congress and Congress should judge if their efforts have been satisfactory or not.

We urge the U.S. trade representatives and the USDA to closely monitor and advise American farmers about opportunities that may be created or the possibilities of trade barriers or unfair trade policies in the world market.

Tennessee horticultural producers support CFR 319.37, commonly referred to as Quarantine 37, and other rules regulating the importation of plants into the U.S. designed to prevent the accidental introduction of pests and diseases which could harm American agriculture. Through the years, the total quantity, originating country and entry locations of imported plants and planting materials have greatly increased. Requests to allow additional plant species to enter the U.S. is of concern and must be subjected to a full assessment including evaluation of areas considered to be most at risk from exotic plant introductions. The foundation of Quarantine 37 should never be compromised, as it is the first line of defense against the introduction of foreign pests and diseases. We support changes strengthening the intent of Quarantine 37. These changes should be developed with full industry involvement.

Our government should give U.S. citizens and companies access to world markets. Retaliatory subsidies for our agricultural exports should be carried out if necessary to give U.S. farmers an equal chance to compete in world markets. We support the use of export market development programs and export subsidies to recapture foreign markets taken from us by subsidized exports. Market development is key. The Farm Bill authorizes four programs to promote U.S. agricultural products in foreign markets, including the Market Access Program (MAP), the Foreign Market Development Program (FMDP), the Emerging Markets Program (EMP) and the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops Program (TASC). Each program should be funded and used to the maximum allowed by law in an effort to increase our foreign markets.

Free trade agreements with cooperative countries are encouraged and should be carefully monitored to ensure the terms are carried out on an equitable basis. Countries unwilling to negotiate reasonable and/or equitable trade tariffs should not be eligible for United States foreign aid money that subsidizes enterprises that directly compete with United States agriculture. Agricultural issues should receive high priority in free trade agreements by negotiators.

We oppose trade sanctions in general and believe food and medicine should be exempt even when trade sanctions are imposed, unless the United States is engaged in a military conflict with a sanctioned nation.

Trade is very important to the United States' economy. Ninety-six percent of the world's population lives outside the United States. Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) for the President is crucial in assuring we obtain trade agreements quickly. TPA supplies U.S. trade negotiators a vital tool in securing a level playing field for U.S.

farmers and businesses and allows our trading partners to know Congress will vote yes or no on a trade agreement without amending parts of it and sending it back for renegotiation. Without that assurance, foreign governments would not negotiate in good faith and make their best and final offers. We support the continuation of TPA to allow the United States to continue aggressively knocking down foreign trade barriers.

We support efforts to open new markets and expand existing markets for U.S. agriculture products. While all markets are important, the U.S. should look to create new opportunities in the rapidly growing Asia-Pacific markets including the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

The United States – Mexico – Canada Agreement (USMCA) is vitally important, not only to Tennessee agriculture but to the entire state's economy. Forty-two percent of all exports from Tennessee go to either Canada or Mexico.

The U.S. government needs to enhance its procedures and responsibilities to protect U.S. interests in USMCA, WTO, and other free trade agreements to increase monitoring and reporting on unfair practices of other nations.

United States' movement toward normalizing trade relations with Cuba by allowing the sale of food and medicine has been positive for both the Cuban people and the American farmer. The United States is now poised to become a major trading partner with Cuba. However, improvements in trade relations are still vital. United States exporters have been hindered in negotiations because of financing and travel restrictions still in place. Congress must end the policy of isolationism and open the way for more United States agricultural exports to Cuba.

United States trade should be fair and honest between foreign markets, however at the same time negotiations should be firmly in the best interest of United States' businesses.

United States companies participating in foreign trade should be discouraged from pricing products cheaper to foreign consumers than to domestic consumers.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Excessive government regulations strangle the productive capacity of our nation and waste our resources. Government agencies often make rules and regulations by administrative decree. Unfortunately, regulations by different agencies of government frequently conflict. All rules published in the Federal Register should undergo Congressional review and approval before final implementation. Too often elected representatives relinquish their decision making responsibilities to regulators or designated boards.

The Legislature should more closely monitor the actions of boards and regulators to determine if the intent of the legislature is being accomplished.

Regulations proposed by any agency should show both the cost and the benefits of the regulations to our economy. Regulations among government agencies must be developed jointly to prevent contradictory requirements.

As regulatory agencies become more involved in controlling agricultural production practices, Farm Bureau should insist on a fair representation of agricultural production and land ownership. We encourage better communication among regulators and producers.

Regulations depriving citizens of their constitutional rights must provide appropriate compensation.

The cost of regulations placed on production agriculture for the benefits of society should be reimbursed to producers. As opposed to most other businesses, producers cannot readily pass on to consumers the cost of these regulations.

STATE AND LOCAL TAXES

The Tennessee Legislature has a responsibility to adequately fund education, law enforcement and other primary roles of state government. For these services, all citizens should be responsible for paying some direct taxes to support government. The tax system funding these programs should be structured to ensure it contributes to maximum efficiency and economy in government.

More efficient government is often the result of lower spending capabilities during downturns in the economy. This situation forces government to prioritize spending. In turn, unnecessary programs and projects go by the wayside.

True tax reform should be revenue neutral. Increased funding for state government should be a separate legislative action that clearly indicates the changing spending priorities.

Historically, Tennessee has benefited from good financial management. It is crucial that revenue projections be based on realistic numbers that lead to sound decisions as to allow the bond ratings to remain at strong levels.

The executive and legislative branches should assure the state is operating at top efficiency before any tax increases are implemented. The judicial branch should also be cognizant of cost.

A major challenge for state government is finding budget balancing strategies without allowing state expenditures, especially healthcare and education, to consume all new revenue growth. While taxpayers are more likely to favor reductions in expenditures, caution should be exercised not to damage any essential state programs.

Sales tax remains a major dependable component of revenues for local governments. Particularly for rural counties, the sales tax on staple items is a main portion of their sales tax base. We oppose the shifting of the state shared taxes away from local governments. As rural residents make purchases in urban areas, their sales tax dollars are distributed there as well. The sales tax distribution formula needs to be adjusted to allow a portion of the dollars to be allocated to the home area of the purchaser.

We continue to support the agricultural exemption from the state's sales and use tax. Items for sales tax exemption should take into account all facets of the agricultural industry including production methods, harvesting, and marketing. All agriculture trailers should be sales tax exempt. Farm Bureau should work to include water purchased from a public utility for agricultural use under the same sales tax treatment as energy inputs under the state and local sales tax blanket exemption. Other businesses are much better able to pass on such costs than are farmers.

We commend the General Assembly for striving to make Tennessee a business-friendly state. Agricultural service activities performed by farmers should be exempted from business tax licenses and fees in the same manner as agricultural production and sales.

We strongly oppose a statewide property tax and a property tax based on the value of a vehicle. A flat-rate wheel tax is more acceptable to our membership because it broadens the tax base.

Long-term capital gains should be taxed at a reduced rate. We applaud the phasing out of the Hall Income Tax through 2021. Rental income should not be made a part of the Hall Income Tax. If the revenues of both local and state government are considered in a reform proposal, property taxes should be replaced.

Since we cannot foresee all of the various combinations of taxes in an effort to reform our tax structure, the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation's Board of Directors should analyze the economic impact to Tennessee farmers of any proposal. The Board should adopt the position with the best long-term economic interest of Tennessee farmers.

We continue our support for the current constitutional limitation that state appropriations not exceed the rate of growth of the state's economy. We urge the legislature to refrain from using the provision to exceed the cap except in true emergencies.

State law allows the sub-classification of property that is used for more than one purpose. To avoid an improper classification of farm property, a strict use of the definition of agriculture should be used when assigning property classifications.

The continued use of the Agricultural, Forest and Open Space Land Act is an incentive for keeping agricultural and forest lands in active production. Only bona fide farmers and landowners of forestry and open space land should qualify under the provisions of the act. Adequate regulations should ensure the integrity of the act is preserved in this regard. However, no regulation should prevent even one legitimate agricultural landowner or forest owner from qualifying for the program. When farmers operate through a partnership, corporation, or other legal entity each should individually be attributed his/her interest up to the 1,500 acre maximum. The 1,500 acre cap should be adjusted to 2,500 acres to more accurately reflect the increasing size of today's farms.

We favor the continuation of the present system of locally assessed personal property.

We urge that state mandated pay levels and pay increases of local government officials and judges be more reflective of local economies and situations.

While we generally favor more authority and responsibility for local governments, the authority to tax must be granted with caution.

FEDERAL INCOME TAX

Due to the importance of agriculture and small businesses to our economy, our tax structure should include income averaging, investment tax credits, rapid depreciation of buildings and equipment, and special treatment of long-term capital gains.

We applaud Congress for allowing states such as Tennessee that do not have a state income tax, to give individuals the option to deduct sales taxes paid from their federal income tax.

The Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) should be repealed. Until repealed, the threshold and deductions allowed should be increased. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act passed December 2017 substantially decreased the number of taxpayers subject to AMT by increasing the exemption and making other adjustments reducing the impact on lower and middle income taxpayers.

Tax reform must not be used as a tool to increase taxes. We oppose all efforts to raise tax rates. Our taxing system must provide farmers with the tools to manage through the volatilities of unpredictable weather and markets. The cash accounting method is used by most farmers because it allows for a simplified record keeping system and provides the flexibility to manage their tax burden by reporting income when products are actually sold and expenses when paid. The use of cash accounting should continue to be allowed for all farmers. We encourage farmers to thoroughly study new tax proposals, including the Fair Tax, and encourage Farm Bureau staff to thoroughly investigate and educate our membership on these proposals.

We support continuation of the deduction of business interest. Growth in most farming operations require the use of debt to be able to purchase land and equipment. Also, many farmers annually depend on credit for operating costs. Business interest tax deductions are an important tool for farmers and should be maintained.

Self-employed individuals should not be denied the deduction for health insurance premiums in cases where the individual or the spouse is eligible to participate in an employer's subsidized plan and they elect not to participate in the employer's plan.

FUEL TAXES

Good highways, roads, and bridges are of vital interest to agriculture and to rural people. We commend the actions taken in

the 2017 IMPROVE Act. We oppose efforts to repeal the actions taken in the IMPROVE Act. To maintain the public's confidence and integrity in the user fee framework of the Highway Fund, future diversions must be off-limits. A key to credibility is to maintain a reasonable balance between revenue needs and road project cost. We oppose indexing fuel tax to inflation. The gallonage basis, rather than percentage of price, should be considered. Road use taxes should be used exclusively for the construction and maintenance of roads and bridges.

We are opposed to shifting fuel tax money away from rural roads and taxing off highway fuel.

County and city governments should have no authority to levy fuel taxes.

The Federal Highway Trust Fund should be designated an off-budget item to ensure road use tax funds are not involved in the general revenue deficit dispute. If the trust fund is kept in the budget, a cap should be placed on the amount of money in the trust fund. Road-use tax collections would cease when the cap is reached.

Pre-paid User Permits for highway-use diesel are important to many farmers and should be made available for all qualified farmers.

ESTATE TAX

Estate taxation stifles the desire to save through asset accumulation. It erodes the incentive for new entry of capital into the economy.

We applaud the governor and the Tennessee Legislature for working cooperatively to phase out the state inheritance tax.

Increased estate and gift tax exclusions have brought much needed relief to farm families. Before these changes, estate taxes were a heavy financial burden. Under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which passed in December 2017, the basic exclusion amount was increased from \$5 million to \$10 million for estates of decedents dying after 2017 and before 2026. The \$10 million amount is indexed for inflation occurring after 2011. The top tax rate of taxable estates is 40%. The increased basic exclusion amount of \$10 million sunsets and therefore will not apply to estate of decedents dying and gifts made after December 31, 2025. We support the permanent repeal of the federal estate tax. Until a permanent repeal of the federal estate tax is achieved, agricultural lands should be allowed to pass to farming heirs completely exempt from estate taxes.

The federal estate-tax exemption should remain "portable between spouses." Allowing the exemption to be transferable from one spouse to the other increases the surviving spouse's exemption and potentially reduces the need to set up complex and costly trusts.

Stepped-up basis is particularly important as farmland is transferred from one generation to the next. We are pleased this law does not have a limitation on the stepped-up basis on inherited assets.

Capital gains tax applied on the appreciated value of inherited property has been suggested as one means of easing the federal deficit. This new tax would cause financial hardship for farm families and would hasten the breakup of viable farms into smaller, unproductive parcels.

III - FARM PROGRAM AND COMMODITIES IMPROVING FAMILY FARM INCOME

The loss of family farmers is nearing a level that should be alarming to all Tennesseans. If the public, government, and all commodity producers do not become more involved and work cooperatively together to find solutions, the agricultural industry in Tennessee could deteriorate beyond levels of recovery. Maintain-

ing a strong viable agricultural sector is important to Tennessee, our region and the United States.

American farmers deserve the right to derive a sustainable income from their efforts if the economic forces of supply and demand truly function. Today's markets are heavily influenced by outside forces affecting farm commodity prices more than the traditional supply and demand economics.

Sometimes the forces of supply and demand increase the price of commodities produced by one sector of agriculture to the disadvantage of consumers in other sectors of agriculture. This has always existed in farming especially between feed grain producers and producers of meat and dairy. However, in a free market system all sectors of agriculture have good times and bad. The farm community is too small as a percentage of the population to advocate policies against one commodity for the benefit of another. Farmers cannot afford to be divided. If we support opportunities for each other, all producers will benefit in their own way.

New alliances, cooperatives and other organizational structures should be explored as marketing initiatives to increase the farmer's net income from his efforts. All agricultural schools, private industries and agencies should assist farmers in overcoming obstacles and developing new markets. Direct, niche and other marketing opportunities should be pursued so producers can receive a greater share of the retail price of his product. Market identification for locally produced products creates an appreciation by consumers, a sense of connection among buyers and sellers and ultimately economic opportunities for Tennessee farmers. The lack of competition in the agricultural marketing structure due to consolidation and concentration within the industry demands producers and government be creative in developing new competition within the agricultural market structure.

Increasing the productivity of land is paramount for the long term viability of Tennessee's farm economy. Two of the most important factors that determine farm profitability are market price and yield. Fluctuations in market prices can be overcome by increases in yield per acre of any commodity. Public and private sector stakeholders in the agricultural industry should never lose sight of the ongoing need for research, education, and technology required to improve the production capacity of farms.

Agriculture can transform the economy and create new opportunities for those who have traditionally made their living in the farming sector and for new entrants with innovative ideas. Technologies that can help farmers make solid decisions and have new options are vital to the future of food and fiber production. Tennessee and the surrounding region should strive to be a globally-recognized place for starting and growing innovative agricultural initiatives to solve global problems and create local opportunities. This vision will require public and private investment over the next decade. Farm Bureau supports increased efforts on the state level to focus on rural enterprise and entrepreneurs in agriculture by leveraging a robust farmer network and assets at research institutes to move agriculture innovation in the state forward.

We support alternative methods of farming that result in a profit for the local farmer. We support efforts to provide information to farmers on proven means of ways to enhance their agritourism farming operations. Agritourism has become an important part of many farming operations in Tennessee. Such operations should have agriculture as their core interest in most of the activities. These operations should give visitors the sense of past and modern farming. It is important that agriculture continue to be the main base of these activities, so exemptions that have been part of agriculture are able to be maintained. Agritourism operations should continue to be able to participate in Tennessee Agriculture Enhancement Program funds as a means to improve operations viability.

Tennessee faces a shortage of slaughter capacity. We believe the Tennessee Farm Bureau, Tennessee Department of Agriculture

and UT Institute of Agriculture should work to find solutions for the shortage of USDA inspected processing facilities. This should include efficient and cost effective ways for custom processing plants to become federally compliant. Personalized and customized options once provided by small packing plants are difficult to find. Producers need to have consistent access to a well-run, federally compliant, flexible and profitable facility to link independent live-stock producers to end consumers. With customized value-added products, we have an opportunity to fill the ever growing demand for locally produced products.

We support programs to enhance opportunities for farmers selling products directly to consumers.

The Tennessee Farm Bureau, the American Farm Bureau and all Farm Bureau members must come together and address these and other issues relating to farm income. The TFBF should continue with informational efforts with the media and public-at-large to better inform and encourage awareness of issues concerning our family farms.

Positive recognition of the economic and social value of the agricultural industry is a tremendous complement to the hardworking farm families of Tennessee. We concur that Tennessee is well-positioned to be number one in growth and development in the agricultural and forestry industry in the Southeast and we are ready to do our part in making this a reality.

We support the Tennessee Department of Agriculture's implementation of a unified industry-wide strategic plan designed to establish a path for future growth and prosperity of the agricultural and forestry industry. We were honored to be included in the plan development and enthusiastically embrace participating in the implementation.

In addition, we support the initiatives of the Rural Task Force and its mission to chart a course to improve Tennessee's rural communities through new resources such as incentives for rural teachers, healthy eating initiatives and seeding a funding initiative for early stage agricultural and rural companies.

TENNESSEE AGRICULTURE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

Agriculture is Tennessee's first and foremost industry. Agriculture deserves infrastructure investments just as any other industry generating revenue and providing jobs within the state.

Tennessee Agriculture Enhancement Program (TAEP) is funded by tobacco tax funds to promote long term investments in Tennessee's livestock and farming operations by providing cost share funds to qualifying producers of food and fiber. This program provides vital support to livestock, grain and specialty crop producers as well as other farmers developing approved diversified enterprises. TAEP gives producers the opportunity to become more efficient, profitable and encourages educational opportunities, as well as healthier livestock. In addition, TAEP also enables producers to make a positive economic impact in their community.

To maintain the integrity of the TAEP program, funds should be utilized only for projects which further agriculture production opportunities, adapt to changing market situations, improve operational safety, or provide a defined agriculture educational purpose. Operations should meet the legal definition of agriculture to qualify for TAEP, in that income generated from recreational, educational, and entertainment activities must be secondary to the commercial production of farm products and nursery stock. Applicants must be actively engaged in the farming enterprise. Just like any government program, TAEP should be monitored to avoid waste, fraud, and abuse.

We encourage the governor, the Tennessee General Assembly and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture to continue to fund and expand TAEP programs to further benefit Tennessee's agriculture industry.

FARM POLICY

The effect of world market prices on domestic prices has a major impact on United States agriculture. Free access to world markets for agricultural products is essential to the health of our economy. Current efforts should be increased to achieve the expansion and growth of agricultural commodity markets, both domestic and international. We support aggressive efforts (such as Trade Promotion Authority) to obtain access to these markets. The value of the American dollar as related to other world currencies must be considered when striving to achieve a level playing field. Until a level playing field can be established, we support continued funding of various export incentive programs designed to price U.S. commodities more competitively in world markets.

A national farm policy should contain the following concepts:

- A market oriented policy allowing farmers the freedom to make production decisions based on markets.
- Strong and effective safety net and risk management programs that protect producers from catastrophic occurrences.
- Compliance with World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements.
- Affordable, practical and effective insurance products to further protect individual risks.
- A marketing assistance loan program with loan rates that better reflect market values.
- Considers the needs of livestock, poultry and specialty crop producers.
- Maintains funding for conservation programs to assist landowners with federal environmental regulations and conservation goals.
- Maintains funding for agricultural research and extension.
- Provides for rural economic development including, but not limited to, access to quality and affordable broadband internet.

As Congress prepares to reauthorize a new Farm Bill, we believe the following priorities should be considered:

- We oppose any further reductions in overall funding for the Farm Bill. We support increased funding for farm programs to reflect the current farm economy however, we recognize there are budget constraints. Congress should at a minimum work within baseline funding without making further cuts.
- Top priorities for funding should be crop insurance, commodity programs, conservation, and trade.
- If reductions are made to the conservation title, we oppose shifting commodity program funding to conservation programs. Priority should be given to working lands programs over retirement land programs. We support a more efficient use of funding and spreading practices across more acres. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) should be reviewed to consider whether highly erodible land is the primary focus given the current farm economy. We believe the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a lower priority than other conservation programs.
- We support changes to the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) program to provide payments more timely. Financial conditions triggering an ARC payment must be reconciled by a producer long before payments are received under the current provisions. Changes could include a partial or advanced payment.
- Yield data should come from the Risk Management

- Agency (RMA) to more adequately reflect yields.
- We support cottonseed being an oilseed in commodity programs.
- We continue to support generic acres however, we support being able to convert generic acres to base acres in the cottonseed program.
- Farmers should be able to update yields and base without adding base acres.
- We support payments based on historic acres rather than planted acres to remain compliant with WTO.
- We oppose decreasing payment limits. We oppose adjusting means testing in a way that captures more participants. We oppose applying payment limits and means testing to crop insurance premium discounts.
- We support a cost effective risk management tool for livestock producers with less complexity and more flexibility.
- We support modifying the “actively engaged” rules to define the term “family” to include non-linear familial relationships.
- We support the concept of a tax deferred farm savings account available for producers of all commodities to use as a risk management tool.
- We oppose separating nutrition programs from other titles of the Farm Bill. The Farm Bill is the United States’ food security policy. We believe it serves the nation well for Congress to enact legislation ensuring a safe and abundant food supply along with access to food for those in need.

It is essential the general public have a basic understanding of the relationship between farm programs and consumer benefits. Therefore, we propose educational efforts directed to the general public to inform consumers of benefits they receive as a direct result of current farm policy.

Personal records shared between the farmer and government agencies should not be available for open review. Placing information on individual farmers in the hands of the public threatens both the safety and integrity of an entire population of our nation’s workforce.

Government interference in free markets, especially by the buildup of price-depressing reserves, should be avoided. Compensation to farmers for increased production costs and market restrictions resulting from government regulations and laws should be made in a nonmarket-distorting manner. For example, incentive payments offered to farmers who reach environmental objectives should be unrelated to production or commodity price.

We oppose added production costs that are the result of mandatory compliance with stringent U.S. or state environmental regulations that often differ greatly from those in competing countries. When costs are imposed, we support the concept of government payments being made as compensatory payments. Such payments should not have absolute limits based on income of the farm operation since larger operations also have larger costs. Payments made to producers under authority of the Federal Farm Program would be administered equitably and reflect true production history if calculated on the most recent recorded yield data.

We oppose cross-compliance requirements between farms. Agriculture is best served by the autonomy of each farm for farm program purposes.

Participation in the federal crop insurance program should remain voluntary. Research and modification of the program to address regional and commodity differences must be continuous. Fraudulent use and abuse of the program must be eliminated if the program is to be successful as a safety net for farm income.

Commodity loan programs should be designed to avert price disasters. Loan rates should be set to allow normal market fluctua-

tion but protect the farmers in times of extremely low prices.

Commodity basis have historically reflected only transportation costs for products to move from local markets to terminal markets. When commodity prices fall below loan prices, some local markets may institute wide basis. This action gives buyers the opportunity to take unfair advantage of producers and the commodity loan program. Action should be taken to correct this abuse of the program.

We oppose Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) rules imposing unreasonable loan fees, favoring subsequent commodity handlers, or unfairly assigning liability.

We support the idea of the CRP to improve soil and water resources. We do not support the concept of the federal government renting land perpetually for the primary purpose of keeping it out of crop production. Payment calculations should maintain a balance with agriculture production cash rental rates. The highest priority for future sign-ups should be given to highly erodible and environmentally sensitive land currently enrolled in the CRP. Existing CRP contracts should be fully funded and any failure by the federal government to honor all terms of the contract should allow the producer to withdraw from CRP free of any penalties and with full restoration of crop bases. Management of CRP land should not impose risk to adjacent land. CRP land should not acquire any easements or restrictions upon exiting the program. We support the right of landowners to plant wildlife food plots without rewriting CRP contracts.

Farmers should be given incentives for good conservation practices such as no-till and maintaining ground cover.

We support the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) as a method to protect and restore grasslands while still allowing grazing practices, haying, mowing and harvesting of seeds. The program supports grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity on lands under threat of conversion to non-agricultural uses. We support wetlands reserve easements under ACEP; however, permanent easements should not be allowed as a part of this program. No easements or restrictions should be placed on lands exiting ACEP and drainage and regulatory wetland status should be allowed to return to the status existing before enrollment. Management of ACEP contracts should not be allowed to adversely affect drainage or usability of adjacent tracts.

The local FSA county committee structure should remain as the primary administrative board for farm programs. Cost reduction alternatives should be thoroughly explored before additional FSA offices are consolidated. Each farmer affected by a FSA office closing should have the right to choose to be serviced by the most convenient service center.

(See also Risk Management, Conservation Compliance and Wetlands)

RISK MANAGEMENT

We continue to believe the purchase of crop insurance should be voluntary and should not be a requirement for participation in any government farm program. If, however, program participation does require crop insurance, then farmers should not be required to buy Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage on non-insurable crops in order to be eligible for disaster payments on insured program crops. Premiums and benefits should be realistic. We support increased involvement by Tennessee Farmers Insurance Companies (Farm Bureau Insurance) in the crop insurance program.

We support a premium structure reflecting actual production history. We support discounts for producers with low claim occurrences. Adjustments to claims should be developed for producers who have losses unrepresentative of the area loss history. Federal rate maps should be kept up to date and reflect flood and other risks as accurately as possible.

We support the expansion of current revenue insurance products and development of new risk management tools, such as cost of production crop insurance that may be offered by private insurance companies and reinsured by the federal government. We urge the coordination of rules between Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC), Risk Management Agency (RMA), and Farm Service Agency (FSA) for farm numbers and tracts.

Agricultural risk management should recognize geographical differences and strive for equality in product availability within a production region. Farmers who diversify into new specialty crops that have no historical crop production data in Tennessee should be able to purchase crop insurance based on production data from other states until an individual production history can be established.

Every effort should be made to eliminate fraud and abuse from crop insurance.
(See also *Farm Policy*)

CONSERVATION COMPLIANCE

Highly erodible lands that have traditionally been in production and do not satisfy the conservation provisions should be allowed to continue in cultivation after reasonable conservation practices have been applied.

Farmers should be given ample time, without penalty, to comply with any conservation plan changes made due to mistakes or change of policy by NRCS or FSA.

Regulatory decisions by NRCS and FSA personnel should be appealable to local boards or committees.
(See also *Farm Policy*)

AGRICULTURAL CREDIT

Since borrowed capital is a primary production tool in modern farming, the Farm Credit System (FCS) must serve the needs of true farmers. The FCS was the first GSE (Government Sponsored Enterprise). The system was created by Congress in 1916 to assure a dependable source of credit at a competitive price for farmers. The system has met that need for more than 100 years. Farm credit has effectively managed its credit philosophy and thus has remained a solid, sound dependable source of credit for farmers and rural residents in Tennessee. Farmers have been able to get needed financing at attractive rates and terms all during the financial crisis and recession. This is largely due to the existence of the FCS which has been able to meet the farmers' needs. FCS has been able to do this by lending responsibly and by building needed financial resources during times of more favorable economic conditions. FCS has performed as Congress intended when it was created.

Locally controlled and independently managed, Farm Credit Associations are more responsive to the needs of local farmers and should be more efficient than a centrally managed system. Financially sound local Farm Credit institutions should not be assessed for losses of other similar associations. These assessed funds are the property of the local stockholders. They should not be taken without stockholders' approval.

We oppose any moratorium on FSA loan foreclosures. Conservation compliance should not be required to get FCS loans.

Updates in the FCS can provide agriculture and rural areas greater access to additional capital that can be used to expand agriculture's contribution to rural prosperity. Businesses "primarily engaged" in supporting a producer's farm operation should be eligible to borrow from FCS. Credit for homebuyers in rural communities should also be more readily available. Under current law, the FCS can finance the purchase of moderately priced, single-family, owner-occupied, rural homes located in a community whose population is 2,500 or less. The population limit should be adjusted to 50,000 to be more consistent with USDA definitions of rural areas.

Rural home lending contributes to the strength and capital base of FCS and ultimately benefits all its members. FCS has more than an adequate capital base to meet all new loan demands both farm and home.

We oppose any efforts to alter the structure of the FCS by allowing commercial bankers to serve on the boards of directors of the various institutions. We oppose the purchase of any agricultural lending institution by foreign banks or governments. The FCS must remain available to the traditional farmer owner as an alternative to commercial banks.

Locally owned independent, Tennessee community banks continue to be an important source of credit to farmers. Every effort should be made to keep locally owned banks a competitive source of agricultural credit. We urge these banks to have loan officers who are familiar with the agricultural industry.

We strongly support the clear title provision in the farm program. The prior notification system provided in the law is better than a central filing system. Tennessee law should allow farmers to operate under the same prior notification system as provided in the federal farm program.

Farm Bureau firmly opposes laws, regulations or policies in farm-lending practices that condone and prolong individual mismanagement. Lending agencies and government programs must not irresponsibly encourage new entry into agriculture at the expense of existing farmers.

Small business loans guaranteed by the U.S. government should be available and promoted for U.S. citizens over non-citizens.

FOOD SAFETY

The United States food supply is the safest, highest quality, most abundant and most affordable in the world. Farmers recognize a safe food supply is important to the integrity of the agricultural industry but most importantly to the well-being and health of the consumer.

With changing technology, the process of maintaining a safe product from the field to the table can always be improved. Policies and procedures that build trust and reliability in agriculture should reflect the latest in technology and research. Regulatory oversight should not impede the farmers' ability to produce. The risks versus the benefits should be considered in any food safety legislation or regulatory proposals. On-farm authority of government agencies should not be expanded. A trace back system should only be used to find and address the point of contamination, rather than simply be a punishment for producers and add costs. Quality assurance programs, research from agricultural colleges and education of food handlers throughout the food supply chain should take priority over expansion of the regulatory process. Increased costs to producers from on-farm inspections and standards should be a last resort of any legislative or regulatory initiative to improve food safety.

We oppose the legalized retail sale of raw milk of any kind in Tennessee.

Imported agricultural food products should meet the same sanitary and quality standards as domestic products and should be labeled by country of origin.

We are opposed to granting mandatory recall authority over meats to the USDA. USDA's current authority is quite sufficient to safeguard the wholesomeness of our meat supply. In the event of a produce recall by FDA, all efforts should be made to identify the source before any media release. Thresholds should be established to minimize negative impacts on producers.

Integrity in food labeling is a vital element in maintaining food safety. Food labeling requirements should remain a function of the federal government. We oppose separate state level labeling requirements of foods sold through interstate commerce. We sup-

port consumer friendly, science based labeling of agricultural products providing consumers with useful information concerning the ingredients, nutritional value and country of origin. Labels should not be required to contain information on production practices not affecting nutrition or safety of the product. Agricultural products produced using approved biotechnology such as GMO, GE, etc. should not be required to designate individual inputs or specific technologies on the product label. We oppose misleading labeling statements such as “bST Free Milk” implying food produced using certain production practices is superior and safer than food using other approved production practices. Foods manufactured to imitate conventional agricultural products should meet the same safety standards and have separate label requirements that signify the difference of the imitation food.

We encourage USDA, the news media and consumers to recognize a zero-tolerance standard for presence of bacteria in meats is not feasible, at least with currently approved technology. We support FDA approval of available technologies that significantly reduce the presence of microbial pathogens in meat. We also support efforts to develop new methods of reducing pathogens in meat.

We support continued monitoring and surveillance programs for BSE and other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE) in the United States. In response to BSE, non-ambulatory disabled cattle are not eligible for slaughter. This strict ban makes no exception for animals that are non-ambulatory due to injury as opposed to illness. USDA rules should make allowances for injured animals. There is no need for additional feed restrictions based on current compliance. FDA must maintain its regulatory decisions based on science, not fear or political or international trade influence.

The TFBF, AFBF, livestock producer organizations and promotion boards should seek to educate consumers on safe methods of handling and preparing foods. Our food supply cannot be completely safe unless consumers understand the basics of safe food preparation and handling.

We encourage the Tennessee Department of Agriculture to assist producers and processors in achieving “third party” audit certification. We also encourage the department to provide food safety training to farmers’ market participants.

We support the Tennessee Department of Agriculture being the lead agency implementing certain components of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). State resources should provide training and all the necessary testing to comply with FSMA standards.

TENNESSEE AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

We realize the critical importance of statistical data in agriculture. Public policy is reliant on sound data. The accuracy of agriculture production data is extremely influential to the market. Producers should realize the importance of voluntary cooperation with the state statistical office.

We encourage an ongoing review of the accuracy of the sampling procedure or development of a method for revising an incorrect report prior to adversely affecting the market. Accurate information supplied by producers to the Statistics Service is the basis for accurate and timely reports necessary to make informed decisions.

We urge cooperation with the Tennessee Agricultural Statistics Service during the collection of data for the U.S. census of agriculture.

AQUACULTURE

Tennessee is facing changes in traditional agricultural production practices and opportunities to expand the existing aquaculture industry appear desirable. The University of Tennessee Institute of

Agriculture, state universities and the Legislature should provide for research and assist with education and expansion of aquaculture farming including production, processing and marketing of aquatic species.

All sectors of the insurance industry, both private and public, should develop and offer insurance products for aquaculture producers.

ALTERNATIVE LIVESTOCK

State and federal governments should recognize the production of exotic animals is a form of agricultural diversification. This enterprise offers new income opportunities for Tennessee farmers. It is important that Tennessee not over regulate this industry to the point Tennessee farmers could not be competitive with producers in other states.

All legal definitions of livestock should be broad enough to include all animals being raised primarily for use as food or fiber for human utilization or consumption. This livestock should not be required to have a USDA permit before sale or transfer, but rather to meet health standards.

Owners of alternative livestock must take proper precautions to prevent transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) diseases, such as Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), from entering their herd. Cervidae are susceptible to CWD. We oppose the importation of live Cervidae, known to be susceptible to Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), into the state of Tennessee. This class of neurological diseases threatens the public's confidence in our food supply and risks unknown health effects on livestock.

We oppose both the importation of white-tailed deer and white-tail deer breeding operations. Known and unknown disease risks are too great and could threaten native wildlife populations and cause economic hardship to the livestock industry. If white-tailed deer breeding operations were to be authorized by the state legislature, we support a law that must protect Tennessee's existing domestic livestock. The law should require the following as a minimum:

1. No animals can be imported into the state without veterinary certification that they have been tested and are free of the following diseases: brucellosis, tuberculosis, blue tongue, chronic wasting disease (must be from a certified chronic wasting disease free area) and any other pertinent diseases that are identified.
2. Animals must be tested on an annual basis and veterinary certified to be free of the above diseases,
3. Adequate fencing must be constructed and maintained to ensure that the animals are not allowed to escape and come into contact with domestic livestock.
4. Appropriate sanctions when animals escape or are released.

If regulations are extended to this industry, the program should be administered by the Department of Agriculture.

Lions, tigers, and other dangerous wild species should be raised only in an approved facility.

BEEF

Farm Bureau is committed to beef producers and has a responsibility to be actively involved in efforts critically affecting the largest sector of our state's agricultural economy. We support the concept of creating regional alliances statewide that are designed to improve net income from beef production. Such alliances will give individual producers, especially those with smaller herds, the opportunity to gain extra value from calves sold through group marketing. We support the following specific activities to add extra value to calves, such as; weaning and preconditioning for at least

45 days, double vaccination, eating from bunks and drinking from water troughs and identifying calves through tagging. We oppose changes in regulations by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) organization that would have a harmful effect on the various value-added programs currently being implemented by producers, such as the Tennessee Beef Alliance.

We support the continuation of the federal and state beef check-off programs and updating by referendum to maintain the effectiveness of the programs. Beef check-off funds should not be channeled through a structure that jeopardizes clear accounting of fund expenditures. Producers should have representation on boards that administer check-off programs. We oppose the development of a national beef check-off program under the Commodity Promotion, Research and Information Act of 1996.

We support the implementation of a voluntary national animal identification program that would enhance disease traceability efforts and, thus, could serve to minimize potential financial damages to producers. Since all segments of the industry will benefit, we believe that all segments should participate in the costs of starting and maintaining such a program. We further believe we should secure the confidentiality of data collected in this program.

We urge the Tennessee Department of Agriculture to investigate the possibility of establishing a program to encourage beef producers who identify animals in their herds that are persistently infected with bovine virus diarrhea (PI-BVD) to isolate or euthanize those animals rather than resell them through local auction markets. We support PI-BVD being a reportable disease. We appreciate TDA making the test for PI-BVD available at no charge, but unfortunately the usual disposal method for these animals is through auction sales which exposes even more cattle to BVD. If any type of workable program can be developed to address PI-BVD risks in cattle herds, we would support using a portion of the Ag Enhancement Fund to fund it. Preference should not be given to specific company's product over another.

We discourage producers from knowingly selling cattle which have tested positive for PI-BVD. It should be the producer's and not the market's responsibility to identify PI-BVD positive cattle.

We encourage;

- a) the establishment of educational efforts to beef producers, by U.T. Extension, including the Master Beef Producer Certification Program, on the cause and effect of PI-BVD within the Tennessee beef industry,
- b) the inclusion of PI-BVD testing and vaccination as part of a complete cow/calf herd health program,
- c) the addition of fetal protection vaccines on all breeding age open female heifers
- d) the establishment of a permanent ID program for some tested positive calf/cattle.
- e) the establishment of a certification program to identify certified negative PI-BVD herds which could be completed by the producer or veterinarian.

Bovine trichomoniasis is a venereal disease that can cause infertility and abortions resulting in extended breeding seasons. Bulls are the main carriers of trichomoniasis and, once infected, remain infected for life but show no signs of disease. Up to ninety percent of cows bred by an infected bull will become infected. Trichomoniasis can have severe economic impacts on cattle producers in Tennessee if the disease spreads from numerous other states already experiencing its rapid infection rates. We commend the Tennessee Department of Agriculture for placing importation requirements on non-virgin breeding bulls coming into Tennessee. We encourage all cattle producers to voluntarily perform best management practices and testing protocols to prevent the spread of trichomoniasis. We support a statewide effort to educate cattle producers about bovine trichomoniasis and methods of prevention.

There is a diverse range of beef cattle operations in Tennessee.

see. As the state's producers strive to add additional value to cattle through backgrounding stocker operations, we recommend UTIA establish an Extension Stocker Veterinarian position to help meet the needs of cattle producers.

COTTON

Cotton is a major contributor to Tennessee's agricultural economy as farmers traditionally have grown over one-half million acres annually in a 22 county area, but acreage dropped during recent years due to price volatility. A return to higher prices will allow cotton to compete favorably with other crops for additional acres.

Farmer financed marketing research and promotion programs for cotton have helped the industry maintain a competitive share of the total fiber market. Producers should give final approval to all research and promotion programs. Marketing programs, which began in 1985, have helped increase both the domestic and foreign demand for cotton.

Since domestic cotton prices are heavily dependent upon bales exported, international trade must be kept as free as possible, so U.S. cotton will be available and competitive in world markets.

We urge Farm Bureau to monitor and take necessary action to protect the interest of cotton producers in the marketing of cotton and cotton seed. Grading methods, such as High Volume Instruments (HVI), allow the industry to deliver a more uniform product to the consumer.

Boll weevils were a major nemesis for cotton farmers for many years. We commend Tennessee farmers for completing the Boll Weevil Eradication Program. Elimination of the weevil has not only decreased the amount of insecticides necessary for cotton production but has increased yields and farmer income as well. We support the continuous monitoring of the cotton acreage for boll weevil infestations. We support a continuation of assessments for the maintenance of the boll weevil eradication program unless cotton farmers vote to remove assessments through a referendum.

DAIRY

Tennessee dairymen provide wholesome, nutritious milk products for consumers and deserve realistic prices for their products. The inability of Southeastern production to satisfy market demand for volume has resulted in federal order pooling, creating a dumping ground for transported milk. These pooling provisions have resulted in lower blend prices. The resulting decrease in Class I utilization has drastically impacted milk prices and impeded the ability of local family dairy farms to survive. It is time the dairy farmers of Tennessee and other southern states be given an equal playing field allowing them to realize the rewards of good management and efficiency.

We support the following changes to the current Federal Milk Market Order (FMMO) System:

- Suspend pooling and pricing provisions that attract non-local production. The value of location should be properly recognized.
- Price local milk as "fluid milk" (Class 1) excluding consideration of other classes.
- Modify the FMMO System so that Tennessee producers actually receive the benefits of Class 1 differentials in mailbox prices.
- Revise the FMMO System to increase "touch-base" days required by milk handlers, producers, and sellers outside the region transporting milk into Tennessee.
- Reform transportation credit regulations. Tennessee producers should not bear the costs of transporting milk into a deficit area.
- Remove block voting from affecting the FMMO System.

- Reinstitute the option for producers to vote on a base excess plan within an order.

Continued decline of dairy producer numbers in Tennessee and other southern states is having a dramatic impact on Tennessee's economy. To save it, these measures have to be supported and implemented.

We support providing decision makers in all facets of national dairy policy with more information and education regarding the current milk pricing system. The complexities of milk pricing make it too difficult to understand for those in a position to reform it. To find solutions to pricing problems, we all must first be able to understand the pricing system. Currently, component pricing is not available in Southeast federal milk orders. Farmers in Tennessee require more information about what effect component pricing would have on the markets in the Southeast. This information should be readily available and easy to understand.

We believe alternatives to the current national dairy policy should be explored. Farm Bureau leadership should determine if there are other modern and efficient methods to provide a more equitable market-oriented dairy pricing program that is in the best interest of Tennessee dairy producers.

National dairy policy should allow and encourage the revitalization of local and regional milk plants that could process regional brands. Such a policy would require some exceptions to current national pooling and blend pricing regulations.

We support expanded use of margin insurance policies. Margin insurance policies should consider the varying costs of production in different geographic areas of the country.

We oppose individual assessment of producers for Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) dairy product purchases.

We support maximized efficiency of research and promotion funds. Dairy promotion dollars are a significant contributor to the high utilization enjoyed by the Southeast. Milk destined for fluid consumption outside its production area should contribute to the support of promotion in the market of consumption. Therefore, we support the principle and practice of dairy farmers' promotion dollars following their milk to the market in which it is sold. Transportation costs of milk imported to the market area of a processor handler should be borne by that processor or handler who has the ability to recover the costs at the retail level.

Dairy farmers should maintain the natural wholesome quality of milk products. Established standards and definitions of milk and other dairy products must be monitored by the industry. New food products should enter the market with accurate content labels and face the quality competition with real dairy products. Our competitors try to take advantage of the good name of dairy products. Imitation or artificial dairy products must be prominently labeled "imitation".

Standardized testing protocols and accurate calibration of testing equipment should be practiced to ensure consistent results when measuring a producer's milk quality. Producers should be able to challenge test results of the processor using independent labs.

We believe Tennessee Agriculture Enhancement Program funds used in the dairy industry may be directed toward a milk quality incentive program.

Imported dairy products must be inspected and clearly labeled at the port of entry. Milk Protein Concentrates (MPC) should be imported with the same tariff as Skim Powder (SMP). The government must close regulatory loopholes that permit, by slight label alteration, many imported cheeses and other dairy products to evade quota or quality regulations. Import quotas on any dairy products should not be expanded. Current World Trade Organization (WTO) language protecting domestic dairy supplies should be enforced. We support the collection of promotion dollars on imported dairy products at the same rate as domestic producers pay.

Dairy producers have the right to prompt payment for their milk. Penalties should be assessed to those handlers who fail to pay promptly for milk delivered as specified in the contract with the producer.

Dairy farmers need adequate protection in the event of a processor bankruptcy.

We encourage placement of milk vending machines in schools and other public locations.

We oppose legalized retail sale of raw milk of any kind in Tennessee. Raw, unpasteurized milk can harbor dangerous microorganisms that pose serious health risk. Farm Bureau and UT Extension should develop an educational program to inform consumers of the risk.

EQUINE

The Tennessee Equine Industry is of growing importance to the agricultural economy of this state. All segments of the industry should work with appropriate agencies to create a greater appreciation and understanding of this industry. The equine industry is supported and sustained as an agriculture endeavor. Equine health, nutrition, and care are intertwined with other sectors of the livestock industry where advancements in production practices are shared. Equine historically and by nature are livestock animals raised on farms. Farm Bureau will oppose any efforts to remove equine from the legal definition of livestock.

The Equine Industry provides a valuable market for many agricultural commodities. Horse and mule owners patronize many farm service businesses. Sales and other taxes collected from horse show tourism contributes to Tennessee's tax revenue.

We support the state's Equine Infectious Anemia Program.

Methods of handling aging horses creates emotional responses by those who view horses as companion animals. There is no evidence to suggest products derived from horses pose any food safety or public health risk. Banning processing for any reason other than food safety sets a very dangerous public policy precedent. Efforts should be made to rebuild the equine processor market which would provide responsible and humane dispatch of horses.

We are proud of the Tennessee Equine Industry and support shows and competition within all breeds and types of horses. Competition showcases the performance and capabilities of a horse. It also encourages steady improvement of genetics and lineage to ensure quality within the breed. We oppose the use of sorring to train horses. Soring damages the health of the horse and damages the reputation of the equine industry.

All inspection processes relative to the Horse Protection Act (HPA) by industry and/or USDA should include science-based criteria to arrive at an objective summation of compliance or non-compliance on all horses. There should be no arbitrary actions taken by industry or USDA inspectors unless warranted by science-based indicators of non-compliance.

Regulations developed by the USDA under the HPA should fairly represent the concerns of the horse industry. Much of the economic impact of the equine industry in Tennessee results from charity or non-profit organization horse shows. These shows have been negatively impacted by the inconsistencies of inspections by USDA Veterinary Medical Officers (VMOs) charged with enforcing the HPA.

We encourage the USDA to work closely with the equine industry to develop a plan that would result in more consistent findings among the APHIS established designated qualified person (DQP) program and USDA VMOs.

We commend the Tennessee Farmers Insurance Companies (Farm Bureau Insurance) for their efforts to provide affordable equine liability coverage as well as an insurance product for mortality and theft.

HAY & FORAGE

In order that farmers might market a more consistent product, we urge USDA, the Forage & Grassland Council and other interested parties within the forage industry to develop standardized testing procedures that create uniformity in forage test results. We recommend proper sampling techniques and the use of certified labs for all forages tested for commerce. The UT Institute of Agriculture should continue to provide independent forage, soil, pest and plant analysis.

Since forages are produced on many farms across Tennessee, we encourage and support continued research on UT Research and Education Centers to improve the quality and quantity of forage production in the state.

FORESTRY PROGRAMS

Tennessee farmers have a vital interest in the forestry resources of our state. Most of our forestland acreage is owned by farmers and should be an important part of farming operations. Privately owned forestlands of our state must be considered an economic resource of the landowner rather than a public environmental resource.

Tennessee landowners need markets for their low-grade hardwood timber to improve the forest quality. The wood chip mills proposed for Tennessee represent markets needed for the low-grade timber industry. No government or private agencies should be allowed to be a deterrent to these markets being developed in Tennessee.

In keeping with this philosophy, Tennessee farmers and landowners should be allowed to use all accepted natural resource land management practices on Tennessee forests. The banning of such approved practices infringes upon the public welfare and private landowner rights.

We cannot afford to get so caught up in the debate of whether it is good or bad to cut trees that we lose sight of the real culprit: the permanent loss of timberland resulting from development. Dollar signs for development coupled with excessive, burdensome regulation discourages private ownership. Tennessee should encourage and not discourage the private ownership and management of forestland. Timber harvesting regulations must be predictable. Restricting harvesting and limiting markets sends the wrong message to landowners. Many improved management practices require long-term investments, and landowners will only make these investments if they have sufficiently secured long-term rights to their land so they know they will realize the benefits of their investment.

We urge TFBF, UTIA and the State of Tennessee Division of Forestry to launch an educational campaign on forest management practices.

We urge the Division of Forestry to continue adequate funding to the programs to combat wildfires in our valuable forests as well as combat threats such as the Gypsy Moth, Emerald Ash Borer beetle and Thousand Cankers Disease (TCD) in our state forestlands by the most effective chemical and other appropriate methods.

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture should have authority as the lead agency for agricultural and forestry management practices. Land-use decisions relating to agriculture and forestry management practices need the scientific expertise available through the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.

Tennessee Farm Bureau supports closer cooperation between forest landowners and division of forestry personnel, with respect to the implementation of BMPs, to prevent water quality degradation.

HONEYBEES & BEEKEEPING

Honeybees are essential and vital to agriculture. The presence of Varroa and Tracheal mites in the United States represents a serious threat to honeybees.

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture, the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, and the United States Department of Agriculture must monitor the movement and control and eradicate the Varroa and Tracheal mite. More aggressive action is necessary. All interested parties must protect the interest of all Tennessee farmers.

A disease known as Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) is killing off entire honeybee colonies across the country. When the disease hits, worker bees from a beehive or Western honeybee colony abruptly disappears. CCD was originally found in Western honeybee colonies in North America in late 2006. The cause (or causes) of the syndrome is not yet well understood.

It is critical that we provide research grant money to immediately address honeybee colony health. Research funding is needed to determine the cause and treatment of the syndrome. Honey producers not only harvest pure honey for human consumption, they provide an invaluable service to help sustain many agricultural crops that rely on pollination.

We recognize the ecological and economic importance of pollinators and the necessity to utilize crop protection products to protect against loss of crop yield. We support the coexistence of crops and pollinators and urge that any pollinator risk assessment required for registration or regulation of crop protection products be based on field relevant scientific data. We support a state led, voluntary cooperative pollinator stewardship program that emphasizes increased stakeholder communication and education.

HORTICULTURAL CROPS

Production, marketing and processing of horticultural crops offer considerable benefits to our state. Producers can develop alternative crops to spread their risk, improve the use of land and labor and increase income. Consumers can choose fresher, higher quality produce at reasonable prices. Consumer dollars are retained within the state. Farm Bureau should make greater efforts to inform consumers and government officials about the benefits of Tennessee's horticultural industry.

We commend the Legislature and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture for the development of improved market facilities and services. The farmers' market system benefits consumers allowing the purchase of fresh Tennessee products directly from Tennessee farmers. The farmers gain the share of sales that usually goes to wholesale and retail merchants. Pick TN Products supports local production and individual producers. This program is a benefit for consumers and producers.

In addition, we recommend expanded horticultural extension, research and teaching by the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture and our state universities. Plant breeders should develop varieties resistant to insects, diseases and viruses. When appropriate, high school vocational agricultural programs should contain more horticultural emphasis. These institutions should emphasize current technological advances. Additional funding is necessary for educational tours and conferences, which include extension specialists to help producers improve their operations and net profits.

Tennessee-grown produce, when available at competitive prices and acceptable quality, should be purchased by state institutions.

The horticultural industry is more closely regulated by state and federal agencies than are traditional crops. Reasonable regulations on horticultural use of pesticides, plant regulators, fertilizers, petroleum, equipment and labor can enhance the ability of

Tennessee producers to compete effectively in terms of price and quality. Food safety concerns and a reduced cost of production to producers are a clear benefit. Consumers need to be aware that reasonable regulations, beneficial to producers, also benefit an abundant, safe, dependable food supply.

We support legislation to require processors, handlers and retailers who purchase perishable agricultural commodities from growers to make full payment within ten days of the date of purchase unless other provisions are made in a written contract.

Production, marketing and processing of viticulture crops (growing of grapes) offers considerable benefits to our state. Grape processors can choose fresher, higher quality grapes at competitive prices if grown in Tennessee.

We support efforts to inform consumers, government officials, and university leadership about the benefits of Tennessee's viticulture industry.

We commend the Legislature and Tennessee Department of Agriculture and the Tennessee Agriculture Enhancement Program for placing viticulture on its priority cost sharing program along with agritourism, aquaculture, bees, fruits, horticulture, organic and value-added produce, as all these are examples of ways farmers can increase and supplement income when more traditional crops may not be adequate. We further support the continued research and development of viticulture and efforts in Tennessee by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and the University of Tennessee Research and Development.

NURSERY CROPS

Wholesale growers of nursery crops, including ornamental horticulture, are farmers as defined by Tennessee Code and they should be treated as farmers by the State Department of Revenue.

Growers of nursery stock can be adversely impacted by regulation restricting plant marketing. A listing on the state "pest plant" registry is a severe restriction and should be considered only when endorsed and petitioned by a broad-based support of the plant industry. Listing of plant material on the "pest plant" registry poses significant hardship to growers when marketing efforts are suddenly altered, and stock values diminished. Single interest petitions of regulatory action often have minimal or no financial impact from such regulation. Market forces can efficiently and fairly regulate plant production.

Some plant material can be invasive and detrimental to the plant industry. We urge the Tennessee Department of Agriculture to maintain such plants listed on the federal list of invasive species, as pest plants in Tennessee.

POULTRY

We recommend the Tennessee Farm Bureau actively represent Tennessee poultry farmers. The Tennessee Department of Agriculture should develop an informational bulletin about poultry integrators, their locations and contracts offered.

We strongly support our poultry producer-members and their role in the poultry industry. We encourage and support open dialogue between the individual poultry producer and the company representative as the most effective method of issue resolution. Information concerning economic conditions of poultry grower/members and grower/poultry company relations is needed. We encourage increased networking between state Farm Bureaus in poultry producing states in order to improve on all areas of the poultry business.

Integrators should justify mandatory modification of buildings and equipment through research documentation. Any modification should be a long-term agreement, negotiated in writing, between the grower and company before installation. The length of contracts should adequately protect a grower's investment in

buildings and equipment. The Tennessee Farm Bureau should seek opportunities with poultry integrators to further understanding between integrators and growers. Special emphasis should be on integrity of the present contractual relationship.

We recommend pay averaging criteria be revised to compensate for integrator production decisions that influence a grower's settlement.

We oppose discriminating against poultry growers who have older facilities. Growers who have older poultry houses but are still able to meet feed conversion and other payment criteria should be paid at the same rate as growers who have newer houses.

Growers should be incentivized within their contracts to earn a premium as a result of proper management and capital investment, however growers should not be penalized because of decisions made by the integrator. Growers should not make less than the base earnings presented by the integrator because of decisions made by the integrator.

Contract producers should be furnished weight tickets on all poultry sold from their farms and on feed delivered to and picked up from the farm.

We encourage exporting poultry meat products and continuing efforts to ensure foreign markets do not discriminate against these products.

We recommend integrators and growers work together to practice all possible bio-security methods to help prevent disease. We recommend integrators notify all producers of any contagious diseases in their area.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has the potential to be devastating to Tennessee's economy because of the destruction an outbreak can cause to the poultry industry. If an outbreak occurs in Tennessee, every effort should be made, including temporary regulatory relief to assist affected growers.

We commend the Tennessee Department of Agriculture for their lead, as well as, other entities on the Tennessee Emergency Management Committee (EMDC) for their development of a proactive protocol to coordinate response and recovery activities for the control of avian influenza.

We believe Tennessee Agriculture Enhancement Program funds used in the poultry industry should be designed to incentivize current growers to invest in improved biosecurity and infrastructure.

We encourage individual producers to voluntarily adopt and follow litter/manure management plans. We urge the University of Tennessee Extension to promote the value of poultry litter as plant nutrient. Composted poultry litter is a high quality organic soil conditioner providing a slower release and longer lasting nutrient benefit than commercial fertilizer. We support aggressive research to address the inadequate scientific information concerning phosphorus. We urge more funding for stack houses, compost houses and other storage facilities through the farm agencies and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. The Tennessee Farm Bureau and the University of Tennessee Extension should represent poultry growers in discussion and policy proposals affecting the quantity and timeliness of spreading poultry litter upon farmland. We urge the Tennessee Department of Agriculture to fund nutrient testing of poultry litter.

Tennessee's poultry industry has an overall economic impact over \$6 billion. The industry continues to grow in the state, therefore we encourage UTIA to have a Poultry Specialist. We support efforts to develop a Master Poultry Producer program to better educate poultry farmers concerning all aspects of the industry.

SHEEP AND GOAT

The Tennessee sheep and goat industry is as widely varied as the state is long.

We encourage UT Extension to support the sheep and goat

industry by employing a specialist with small ruminant expertise to support the educational efforts of county extension agents, producer associations and University teaching and research. We commend the Herbert College of Agriculture for offering a sheep and goat course. All state universities are encouraged to maintain and establish sheep and goat flocks on university farms. Thanks to UT Extension and Specialists for their educational efforts in the "Master Small Ruminant Producer" programs being offered across Tennessee.

We support the Scrapie Eradication Program. We support the Sheep Check off.

We recognize efforts of Tennessee Livestock Producers to provide marketing opportunities for Tennessee sheep and goat producers.

Greater accessibility of USDA inspected sheep and goat processing facilities is needed in Tennessee.

SOYBEANS

Soybean production has a major impact on the Tennessee economy. More acres are devoted annually to produce soybeans than any other row crop and the crop's value is consistently very near the top. The government should not impose embargoes, acreage controls, quotas, market allocations, set-asides, or establish a reserve for soybeans.

We commend the soybean industry for its aggressive research that is continually developing new products manufactured from soybeans and soybean products. We also commend the industry for its continuing efforts to develop markets overseas for Tennessee grown soybeans.

We support the use of a grading system that compensates farmers for producing clean, dry, high-quality soybeans and grain handlers for keeping them that way. The marketing of soybeans on a clean dry-matter basis accomplishes this goal.

The arrival of pests and disease to the U.S. is of great concern to soybean producers nationwide. The EPA should approve suitable pesticides and fungicides in a timely manner to assure an adequate supply for proper control. The USDA should strive to minimize any adverse effects pests and diseases might have on our exports.

TOBACCO

Elected officials and other citizens need to understand how tobacco production benefits Tennessee. Tobacco farming and processing creates and preserves jobs and generates tax revenue of which approximately \$251 million will go to fund K-12 education, higher education, trauma centers and agriculture in Tennessee in 2018 - 2019.

Since there are many potential uses of tobacco, the Legislature should appropriate adequate funds for research.

We encourage tobacco companies to continue to support research and development carried out by U.T. Research and Education Centers. This is a valuable service to farmers who continue growing tobacco.

We urge the tobacco companies to conduct their procurement procedures in a manner that builds integrity in the tobacco market. Contract relationships should be constructed with equal commitment from all parties.

Recognizing that tobacco is a legal crop, we support USDA collecting data and issuing reports on tobacco acreage, production, and prices received by tobacco type. We also support authorizing the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to collect data and provide market analysis on tobacco.

We support efforts to include foreign buyers in our market system. We realize the need for foreign market promotion and support a referendum for a grower imposed voluntary promotion

check-off.

Tobacco farmers do not claim there are no health risks involved in the use of tobacco. The rights of both nonusers and users should be appreciated and recognized.

We support the state law to prohibit the sale of tobacco products and nicotine delivery devices to minors.

We support the deglamorization of tobacco products to teenagers and urge the tobacco industry to impose reasonable restrictions on advertising to deter the use of tobacco products by minors.

TBBF must remain vigilant for the challenges that will come with a changing industry by preserving an environment that is not adverse to the quality and price relationship to market determination for those who continue to grow tobacco.

We oppose lowering the regulatory permissible levels of naturally occurring compounds in tobacco products if those levels are currently unattainable through plant breeding, production practices, and/or the curing process.

COMMODITY MARKETS

Farm Bureau supports free markets. Speculation in our commodity markets provides liquidity and pricing opportunities. However, there is a difference between speculating in a market and manipulating a market. A manipulated market is not a free market.

The Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) should have the authority and the resources to prevent and, where necessary, punish bad actors.

The American Farm Bureau Federation should have a seat on the CFTC. One or both of the Congressional Agricultural Committees should conduct a regular and thorough review of the CFTC and our commodity markets.

We also encourage the CFTC to add additional certified delivery points up and down the Mississippi River Corridor.

East Tennessee does not have a grain market infrastructure to serve producers in the region. The Tennessee Department of Agriculture should coordinate efforts to develop and recruit markets to serve East Tennessee producers.

We support an interstate grain industry oversight board comprised of actively engaged farmers from surrounding states. The board would be appointed by the participating state's governors. The board would meet as needed with grain merchandisers to discuss new markets, dock schedules, proper grading and any other important issues facing farmers.

FARM INPUT COSTS

American agriculture is dependent upon the input of raw materials and products from both domestic and foreign suppliers. Recent price increases in these essential products have occurred at a rate never before experienced by the agricultural community and have placed farmers in a position of financial stress. Input costs have reached levels that are forcing farmers to change production practices and this will lead directly to reduced amounts of food and fiber produced.

Corporate mergers and consolidations have reduced the amount of competition among farm suppliers and the impact this consolidation may have on input costs, has become a major concern of farmers. Farm Bureau should continue to push for a thorough evaluation of any further consolidation of our input suppliers. USDA should work closely with the Department of Justice in their review and investigation into mergers, consolidations or concentration of agricultural input suppliers. We are concerned about consolidation by agricultural equipment dealers at the direction of equipment manufacturers. The loss of competitiveness among dealers severely restricts farmers' rights to find the best available price and is contrary to a competitive retail market.

Equipment manufacturers should be held to a high standard

for product quality. We believe state laws should provide consumer protection for farmers that experience chronic maintenance problems on new equipment. We believe property rights should extend to every component of farm machinery. We support farm equipment owners and individual service technicians having access to diagnostic tools, equipment, procedures, service, and technical information necessary at a fair and reasonable price.

We recommend tariffs on fertilizer imports be reduced or eliminated. Petroleum products used in the manufacturing of major agricultural inputs should carry tax credits as a means of offsetting their price increases.

A major portion of the domestic fertilizer industry has either temporarily or permanently shut down. This has resulted in a significant amount of fertilizer being imported from foreign sources. Fertilizer is a global commodity and the U.S. is one of the largest importers. While we support free trade and economic freedom, the Tennessee Farm Bureau has serious concerns in terms of food security in the future when so much of the fertilizer needed to raise the food and fiber for this nation is being imported.

Biotechnology has become commonplace on farms today. Seed companies have charged substantial technology fees since the introduction of new varieties. It is time for some fee relief for farmers on this aging technology. Farmers should be allowed to save and replant their own biotech seed by paying a minimal tech fee to the patent holder.

COMMODITY HANDLERS SECURITY REQUIREMENTS

Agricultural producers are severely affected when handlers of agricultural products file for bankruptcy. Federal bankruptcy laws should be changed so agricultural producers are given first priority in the distribution of the net assets of agricultural handlers who file for bankruptcy. Bankruptcy laws should ensure that people who fraudulently declare bankruptcy receive severe sentences. Those who commit fraudulent acts should be required to make restitution and meet a specific time lapse before being allowed to go back into business.

State and federal licensing and bonding laws and regulations must be strengthened. Licensing requirements should be strengthened with provisions prohibiting slow payment by commodity handlers. License denials, as the only encouragement for good business practices, can eliminate limited markets for agricultural commodities.

Dairy farmers should have protection against processor bankruptcies. Buyers or handlers of agricultural products, such as horticulture, not currently regulated must be required to provide adequate financial security based on the volume of commodities handled to protect producers.

We continue to support the Tennessee Grain Indemnity Fund and Commodity Handler and Warehouse Law. The grain indemnity fund must remain a viable program.

Producer protection programs in our surrounding states should be monitored to ensure protection for those who may be marketing across state lines.

LIVESTOCK MARKETING

For many years, the livestock industry has taken pride in the fact that most livestock has been traded on a handshake and a promise to pay. The Packers and Stockyards Division's bond process and the industry payment and contract practices should provide protection to livestock producers and livestock markets in the event of default on the part of livestock brokerage businesses. Livestock buying stations should follow the same Packers and Stockyards Division rules and regulations as livestock markets regarding payment to producers and bond requirements. Stronger enforcement of prompt pay is needed. Modern banking practices should

be implemented throughout the livestock industry including but not limited to custodial accounts for dealers and order buyers, electronic transfer of funds, and debit or other types of banking cards. These non-payments not only affect those selling livestock, but the resulting domino effect causes financial hardships for others as well.

Producers and auction markets sell livestock to dealers. When these livestock dealers fail to pay, the sellers are left financially devastated. Dealer bonds under the Packers and Stockyards (P&S) Act are designed to protect against buyer payment default. However, dealer bond payments average less than 15 cents on the dollar. The creation of a Dealer Statutory Trust would greatly improve financial recovery. A statutory trust would give unpaid sellers of livestock first priority in livestock and accounts receivable in the event of a dealer default. At the same time, a Dealer Statutory Trust would be simple and efficient because it would not require a separate account or changes to current business practices.

We encourage the AFBF, the Livestock Markets Association, and other interested parties to work with USDA to evaluate the current level of protection afforded through the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). If these levels are determined to be inadequate, we propose updates that would adequately protect sellers of livestock while not imposing unrealistic costs on buyers. We believe AMS should be accountable to the livestock industry by providing current information concerning license and bond amounts of livestock markets, livestock dealers, and livestock order buyers.

We encourage TDA to fully staff and support the Market News Reporter positions and the state grader positions. The market news reporting provides impartial market news to producers and state graders allow producers to participate in added value sales, thus capturing more dollars at the farm level.

PACKER CONCENTRATION AND VERTICAL INTEGRATION

We are extremely concerned about the effects of packer concentration and vertical integration on the pork and beef industries. The TFBF and AFBF should work to ensure that changes in the structures of the livestock and meat industry do not have an unfairly adverse impact on independent livestock producers. Farm Bureau should:

1. Encourage thorough investigation by the Justice Department in all cases of concentration or integration that may violate antitrust law.
2. Encourage livestock buyers to use premiums/discount schedules that reflect actual carcass value. Quality goals should be as clear as possible and published so independent producers will have a chance of achieving them.
3. Investigate the reasons for the extremely wide farmer-to-retail margins that currently exist in pork and beef and take action (if possible) to keep these margins at reasonable levels.

We commend Tennessee Livestock Producers for their efforts in providing competitive markets and urge them to continue efforts to improve this service to meet current market demands. We encourage other entities, whether cooperatives or private companies, to provide fair and competitive markets for Tennessee livestock.

We support Congressional approved mandatory price reporting requirements. These programs should give producers the best, most complete information possible with which to make marketing decisions.

The rights of integrators and contractors or those producers who wish to contract with them should not be abridged, but our efforts should be to ensure that independent producers who can efficiently produce high quality hogs and cattle will continue to have local competitive markets for their products.

ANTITRUST MONOPOLY

Monopoly power in our society, especially agriculture, is a threat to our competitive, free enterprise system. Our current antitrust laws often do not work or are not being enforced as can be seen by the many past mergers and consolidations within agribusiness. Many giant companies have potential undue control or influence on agriculture. Greater competition among buyers and suppliers within agriculture will lead to a healthier agricultural economy. We need an effective, adequately enforced antitrust policy.

We oppose mergers, acquisitions or leveraged buyouts that tend to create a monopoly of production, marketing and transportation situations or reduce competition in acquiring, pricing or transportation of commodities and products.

The steadily declining number of companies that supply farm inputs, purchase crops, or buy and process livestock has reduced competition in the marketplace. Competition is essential to establish true and fair prices. Congress should maintain an awareness of the situation and take appropriate action to prevent farmers from being adversely affected by the creation of any antitrust situations.

Farm Bureau and our elected officials should closely study, monitor and take appropriate action on behalf of the agricultural producers.

Farm Bureau should propose the creation of an antitrust division within the Department of Agriculture completely staffed and funded to investigate and pursue mergers, consolidations, monopolies, and oligopolies.

PRODUCTION CONTRACTS

Producers are entitled to fundamental rights when producing commodities under contract. These rights are more important because consolidation in agriculture may lead to anti-competitive practices and decrease prices paid to farmers. All contracts should be written so risks to both parties are disclosed. Contracts should be written that provide protections to producers.

Contract producers should be allowed a reasonable time period to review their contract. Farmers should receive the first priority lien for payments due under contract if a company goes out of business. Producers should be protected from unfair practices that include, but are not limited to, having their contracts terminated or other retaliatory actions for joining producer organizations.

Producers should be involved in the contract development process. Production contracts should have provisions for addressing the impact of volatile input costs on producers.

We support private enterprise and fair market competition where agricultural producers can choose to freely enter into production contracts and marketing agreements, when producers believe it is in their best interest to do so.

When producers have ownership of a commodity, we support their right to enter into any contractual arrangement which they believe is in their best interest, and those contracts should be personal, private, and free from government interference.

We oppose any governmental regulation that limits or adversely affects the rights of producers to work cooperatively with processors, or other entities within the production system to be rewarded as they bring premium value-added products to market.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Modern livestock production techniques supply generous amounts of high quality food for consumers. These same practices have also instituted the highest degree of animal care in the history of livestock production. No other element of society, including any animal rights group, has more compassion or concern for livestock than does the farmer. However, we do not believe in the human-

izing of animals. Man and animals do not exist with the same basic rights. There are theological, scientific and philosophical arguments for why man cares for animals, so they may serve him.

Man has a moral obligation to avoid cruelty in dealing with animals in all situations. All farmers and animal owners should follow the best practical animal care practices. Farmers are responsible in their treatment and care of livestock.

We support the Tennessee animal cruelty law and aggravated animal cruelty law as written and the enforcement of these statutes.

We commend all members of the Farm Animal Care Coalition of Tennessee (FACCT) for uniting to defend and promote animal agriculture. FACCT collectively represents the animal agriculture industry with a factual, proactive voice and serves as a resource regarding humane animal care and well-being issues and best management practices. We encourage state government and local governments to recognize and utilize FACCT as a credible and reliable resource regarding farm animal care.

Animal rights organizations should not be given authority to establish standards for the raising, handling, feeding, housing or transporting of livestock and poultry. Making accurate decisions regarding claims of animal cruelty is often a very difficult determination. Prior to charges being filed, a duly trained officer of the county sheriff's department, or other qualified animal cruelty investigator as specified in the animal cruelty statute must issue probable cause which then must be confirmed. Complaints related to livestock cruelty statute violations should be the responsibility of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. Upon review of the situation, TDA in cooperation with local law enforcement should determine a plan of action. All records concerning individuals accused of alleged livestock abuse should remain confidential unless disclosed pursuant to a valid subpoena or court order. Knowingly making false reports of alleged livestock abuse should be a crime and subject to TDA fines.

Whereas, all veterinarians may not have chosen a large animal or farm animal discipline or have livestock production experience, we oppose efforts by veterinary groups to support animal rights agendas. Veterinary professionals should support scientific based standards for treatment and care of livestock.

An aggressive, comprehensive, educational program presenting the facts of livestock and poultry production is needed for school children. Curriculum guides heavily oriented toward vegetarianism should not be used in the classroom. We are opposed to the concept of animal rights and oppose the expenditure of public funds to promote the concept of animal rights in or out of the classroom. All classroom materials should be monitored for accuracy and misleading presentations be removed.

We urge USDA and TDA to endorse farmers' efforts to educate the public regarding best management practices in livestock care for the production of safe food for the consumer.

We support the exemption of agritourism animal displays from licensing under the federal Animal Welfare Act.

Breaking into a farm, animal research facility or any other agricultural facility to steal animals, vandalize, or disrupt the activities of the facility is a crime. Those guilty should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

VETERINARY SERVICES

Veterinarians specializing in large animal practices are an economic necessity for a strong livestock sector for Tennessee agriculture. To ensure the profitability of a livestock operation, farmers need strong, healthy animals. Large animal veterinarians help livestock producers stay abreast of and have access to the latest technology available in large animal care. We encourage the University of Tennessee School of Veterinary Medicine to emphasize the need of large animal practitioners to both current and poten-

tial vet students. We encourage the development of a four-year undergraduate veterinary practitioner degree at the University of Tennessee. This program would be a joint effort of the College of Agriculture Animal Science Department and the College of Veterinary Medicine. Veterinary practitioners would work under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian. Laws and regulations pertaining to veterinary practices should not discourage or inhibit large animal practices.

A distinguishing definition of acceptable livestock management practices as opposed to veterinary medical practices is needed to avoid unnecessary conflict between the veterinary community and the farm community. We need and depend on one another. Everyone wins if responsible, proper, safe, cost efficient, animal care is made the top priority. We encourage the Tennessee Veterinary Medical Association (TVMA) to caution large animal veterinarians about the impact of increasing drug costs on the producer and the veterinary practice.

The Food and Drug Administration Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) reflects a major change in the way producers protect and enhance animal health and will present many challenges throughout all of animal agriculture. We encourage the veterinary community, the University of Tennessee, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, the Tennessee Farm Bureau, and other commodity organizations to work collaboratively toward providing solutions for producers as they comply with the VFD.

Farm Bureau recognizes there is a shortage of large animal veterinarians in some portions of the state. We encourage the University of Tennessee School of Veterinary Medicine and the TVMA to continuously monitor the state for underserved areas for large animal veterinarians and to institute measures to provide additional veterinary service to those areas. We support federal and state programs that would provide financial incentives for large animal veterinarians that have graduated and are in the process of establishing practices.

We encourage Farm Bureau and other organizations representing the various facets of the large animal industry, such as the Tennessee Cattlemen's Association and other groups, to maintain good communications with the UT vet school and the TVMA to provide support in addressing the shortage of large animal veterinarians.

We further encourage Congress to ensure adequate funding for the Animal Disease Center and Veterinary Services Laboratory. Research and programs for disease control are critical in maintaining a protected, healthy livestock industry; thus, assuring a safe, abundant food supply.

SEED AND PLANT REGULATIONS

Tennessee must not become a dumping ground for inferior seed or plants. Tennessee needs the ability to maintain a seed and plant supply equal to, or better than, our neighboring states. The State Department of Agriculture should have exclusive jurisdiction and authority over all matters related to the regulation of seed.

The Tennessee Seed Law improves seed quality standards. It assures farmers of high quality seed labeling and distribution standards. We recommend further amendment of this law to require all tall fescue seed sold in Tennessee should label percentage of infestation with the endophytic fungus, Neotyphodium coenophialum.

The state Department of Agriculture must assure farmers that imported plants and those grown for resale in Tennessee are of high quality and of the specified variety. The Department of Agriculture should develop a listing of in-state and out-of-state producers of disease-free plants and seeds.

We support the use of biotechnology in plant breeding. We support seed vigor standards. We support seed vigor test results be included on seed labels.

We insist companies involved in researching and developing bio-engineered seed (such as Roundup Ready seed) act responsibly when and if failure occurs.

Companies should be held liable for losses that occur when producers plant the seed and follow company recommendations for crop production and the apparent cause of failure is plant breeding and/or genetic breakdown of the plants.

AG CHEMICALS

We support the Tennessee Department of Agriculture assuming primacy for applicable pesticide laws and regulations. A program developed by Tennesseans should be more sensitive to the needs of Tennessee farmers.

We support legislation limiting authority for pesticide regulation solely to federal and state governments.

State and federal agencies using pest control chemicals should adhere to the same restrictions and public scrutiny as farmers.

We oppose any regulations requiring a permit before application of a chemical for crop protection. We oppose curtailment of the proper use of agricultural chemicals, unless further research and scientific data detects injury to health and well-being would result.

We support the continued use of agricultural chemicals that currently have no viable alternatives, such as methyl bromide. We encourage research to find alternatives for methyl bromide that are economically viable, of equal performance and sensitive to the exposure needs of individual crops.

Farmers should not be mandated to have "Certified Crop Advisors" for buying and using agricultural inputs.

We urge Congress and the appropriate agencies to address the cost of the label registration and re-registration for chemicals to be used on minor-use crops and to provide methods of label clearance for them.

More prompt certification of agricultural chemicals for commercial usage should be pursued to the maximum degree possible without endangering public health. Prompt certification reduces farm production costs and promotes conservation tillage practices.

Those who keep accurate records of federally restricted use pesticide applications are good managers. By using pesticide records, farmers can make decisions that save time and money. Maintaining up to date records (at least 2 years after application) regarding the use of federally restricted use pesticides is also required by law and such records are subject to random inspection. Pesticide record keeping requirements should be closely monitored to ensure confidentiality and fairness to all farmers.

We oppose USDA unilateral changes in record keeping requirements.

We are concerned with the EPA Worker Protection Standards. We appreciate the effort to protect all agricultural workers exposed to agricultural chemicals. These regulations are excessive by including those agricultural workers who do not come in direct contact with chemicals. Therefore, we support an exclusion by EPA of those involved in grain, cotton, and forage farming similar to the exclusion provided for those involved in livestock production.

We oppose enclosed cab requirements for application of crop protection chemicals for noncommercial applicators.

We urge Congress to provide greater oversight of EPA's review of crop protection chemicals. EPA needs to be held accountable to make timely, science-based decisions and not bow under pressure from activist groups.

We recommend the use of integrated pest management strategies to protect crops and reduce pesticide applications. Farm Bureau should work with the EPA and OSHA to identify problems in the use of crop production chemicals. Benefits from the use of these chemicals should be weighed against environmental risks. Farm Bureau must insist realistic tolerances are established by the

EPA and OSHA throughout the agriculture industry.

Mandated reductions in atrazine application rates have resulted in weed population buildups in many Tennessee cornfields. For many weeds, such as burcucumber, practical alternatives do not exist. Triazine contamination of water supplies has not been a problem in Tennessee. We urge the adoption of a regional label for atrazine at higher rates. We urge label use rates high enough for control because inadequate rates hasten buildup of resistant weeds.

We support the research for the control and eradication for herbicide/pesticide resistant weeds/species.

We support and commend TDA's efforts to seek balanced, meaningful and common-sense regulations in regard to crop protection technologies.

Farmers should not be charged a fee for restricted use pesticide certification or re-certification.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

Advancements in biotechnology are having tremendous positive impacts on agriculture. These developments are beneficial to all sectors of our society, not just agriculture. Therefore, Farm Bureau should strive to inform the public of the beneficial effects implementation of these new production practices will have on the environment and the well-being of the community.

We support increased efforts through biotechnology to increase the marketability of our products, to solve environmental concerns, to increase net farm income by decreasing input costs, and to improve product quality and acceptability.

We urge state and national political leaders to develop a positive national strategy for biotechnology research and development. Part of this strategy should include an open and frank dialogue with all interested parties. Only the continued support and encouragement of technological advancements will assure our viability in world markets. We encourage the USDA to take a lead in coordinating efforts to evaluate and move approved products and technologies to the marketplace quickly. The approval of new products should be based on safety and efficacy criteria, and not on socioeconomic criteria.

Patents should be broad enough to provide reasonable protection of development costs but should not be so broad as to grant one developer the right to a whole class of future developments. Patents should be granted only on invented devices or processes, not on discoveries of naturally occurring genes, chemicals, or other biological systems. Companies should not sell U.S. patented seeds in countries that do not provide patent protection. This gives foreign producers a competitive advantage over U.S. farmers who must pay for development costs and abide by patent laws. Farm Bureau should work to inform farmers of their rights and obligations under U.S. patent laws regarding plant varieties and other biological material.

We favor a competitive seed industry in which producers may choose from a wide variety of tested cultivars. We encourage seed companies to continue producing and making available conventional and genetically modified seed varieties other than glyphosate resistant varieties allowing farmers to have the option to use these as a management tool to curb weed resistance. Innovation should be encouraged and rewarded through a competitive, open market for seeds. We encourage cooperation between seed companies and public universities to effectively test and evaluate varieties. We support free access to varieties on which patents have expired. The right to plant any variety on which the patent has expired should be protected by law. Sales agreements should not seek to limit this right.

Careful study and evaluation should occur before any Technology Protection System (TPS) traits are introduced into our seed supply.

We support the research efforts in biotechnology at the University of Tennessee and anticipate the new technology that will be available to Tennessee and American agriculture. We urge the University to release the research and patents developed into the public domain, similar to the way public seed varieties have been released.

We oppose any law or regulation requiring registration of farmers who use or sell products approved for sale by the Food and Drug Administration.

We oppose mandatory labeling of genetically modified foods. We oppose the classification of Bt corn as a chemical by EPA.

COMMODITY PROMOTION PROGRAMS

Check-off programs give farmers the ability to fund and control promotion, education and research for their benefit. However, state and federal governments should not cease funding research and promotion with the intent of allowing the check-off funded programs to cover these costs.

All state and national legislation and administrative actions establishing a mandatory commodity check-off to finance research and promotion programs should contain the following provisions:

1. Individual producers should have the right to vote to begin a promotion program for a commodity they produce. The referendum should be conducted on the basis of one vote per producer without regard to volume of production. A simple majority vote must be attained for implementation.
2. In proposed state check-offs the Tennessee Department of Agriculture should conduct and finance referendums for state commodity promotion programs. Subsequent voting for recall, increasing assessments or other purposes should be conducted by the Department and financed by funds collected from the program.
3. Bloc voting by marketing cooperatives should not be allowed. Each producer should be responsible for his own vote.
4. A recall vote by petition should be provided. No more than 10% of producers who voted to start a program (meaning total of all votes, yes or no) shall be required for a recall vote.
5. A simple refund procedure on initial programs should be provided. Producers should not be required to submit refund applications more frequently than six-month intervals.
6. Funds collected by the program should only be used for research, promotion, and educational activities designed to increase consumption, improve consumer knowledge, awareness and understanding, and improve the efficient production of the commodity. Separate accounting should be used to identify the origin and expenditure of check-off and organizational funds in the event membership and promotional activities co-manage for efficiency. Governing board accounting should remain separate to protect the autonomy and overall purposes of check-off funds.
7. Policy-making boards directing the expenditure of funds should be composed entirely of producers.
8. In proposed state check-offs the organization collecting and distributing these funds must file an annual financial statement with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. These annual itemized financial statements should be available for public inspection and/or distribution to producers from whom these funds were collected.

Corn is a primary commodity in Tennessee. However, there is not a national or state check-off program for corn. We believe a corn check-off would provide economic benefits for producers just as check-off programs have for other commodities. Therefore, we support a one cent per bushel state check-off for corn.

We urge the agricultural media to report to the farm community information on the activities of the commodity-promotion programs.

IV - RURAL LIVING FARM SAFETY

Statistics from the National Safety Council indicate farming is a high-risk occupation. Medical help is usually far from the scene of an accident. Each year, hundreds of lives and millions of dollars are lost on farms because of preventable accidents and illnesses. Farm families and employees need to be more aware of safety and health precautions on the farm. We should prepare for emergencies and know how to cope until help arrives. In addition to current annual required training for all EMS and rescue organizations, we urge an additional requirement of annual farm emergency and rescue training. Farm Bureau, the University of Tennessee Extension, and agricultural education groups should conduct farm safety programs for the benefit of farm families.

In responding to emergencies, the minutes and seconds saved can mean the difference of life and death. Reducing the time in responding to emergencies can also save thousands of dollars in property damage or medical costs. It is in the interest of all Tennesseans, especially those living in rural areas, to have access to modern and reliable 911 and E-911 service. We commend our Tennessee Emergency Communications Board for their leadership in helping Tennessee have every emergency communications district equipped to capture cell phone call back numbers and (within a certain degree of accuracy set by the FCC) the latitude and longitude of the caller. We support efforts to advance coverage of 911 and E-911 in all Tennessee counties. We oppose efforts by the state to use monies collected from 911 fees for other governmental purposes.

Underground propane tanks should be visibly marked to prevent accidental damage by farm equipment and vehicles.

All farmers should exercise caution and safety when working in the proximity of power lines or other similar hazards. For safety reasons, we encourage landowners to call 811 before conducting an excavation.

We urge utility companies to review their standards for the height of utility lines. New standards should be implemented which recognize the height of modern farm machinery.

Utility companies, particularly cable T.V. and telephone, should be made to keep their lines in excess of 18 feet high.

FENCE LAWS

Agricultural fences should be constructed and maintained according to generally accepted agricultural practices, so they will be sufficient to keep animals confined to a tract of land. Partition fences should be constructed and maintained by both landowners. If one does not have livestock, but the land is being held as a public use area, both property owners should be held jointly responsible for the fence construction and maintenance. If one landowner desires to build more than a generally accepted sufficient fence he should be responsible for the extra cost and maintenance. A farmer whose livestock is not known to be notorious and escapes through a sufficient fence should have no liability.

Educational efforts on the fence law should be a continual process.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Any erosion of private property rights weakens all other rights guaranteed to individuals by the Constitution.

We oppose any legislation allowing access to or through private property without permission of the property owner or authorized agent. New technology expands the boundaries of property rights infringement. State and federal laws should evolve with these technological advancements to maintain the traditional concepts of private property rights.

All local, state and federal regulations encroaching on the rights of private property owners should be reviewed and altered. The Presidential Executive Order 12630 regarding the protection of private property rights should be made law.

In addition, any action by government that diminishes an owner's right to use his property is a taking of that owner's property. Therefore, government should provide due process and compensate to the exact degree that an owner's right to use his property has been diminished by government action.

The use of eminent domain or easements by federal, state and local governments or a private entity should be prevented when taking agricultural and forestlands for government projects when any other alternative is available.

We commend the General Assembly for additional safeguards in state law to ensure the power of eminent domain is not abused. Granted, circumstances exist where land must be acquired for a legitimate public use. We must not forget such cases result in individual property owners shouldering a burden that benefits society as a whole. Public use should be clearly defined to provide maximum property rights protection. Agricultural lands should never be considered "blighted" property. In addition, private property should not be taken to increase property taxes or for the profit of other private parties.

We oppose granting boards and authorities' eminent domain power beyond their creating entity.

Easement right-of-ways obtained by the public or private sectors should not be committed to any new or additional purpose during its original usage without consent of the landowner underlying the easement. If the easement right-of-way is abandoned, the land should revert to the original landowner or assignee.

Relationships of adjoining landowners are better maintained when property boundaries are clearly identified. Sometimes surveyors and attorneys make mistakes drawing property lines and writing deeds. Notification to all adjoining property owners should be required by law in all cases when a discrepancy is believed to exist by surveyors or attorneys. The surveyor should work with the adjoining landowners to resolve any discrepancies before recording the survey.

We urge landowners to contact the Tennessee Board of Examiners for Land Surveyors when they have complaints concerning surveys/surveyors.

We believe property rights extend to the transfer of property upon death. We oppose any legalization, including tax provisions, which could inhibit the intentions of a property owner for his/her property after death. We support a legal mechanism to allow a transfer-on-death deed.

RIGHT-TO-FARM

We support Tennessee's Right-To-Farm Act that limits nuisance lawsuits against farm operations. We believe the Right-To-Farm Act applies to all activities related to the production and marketing of farm products and the recreational and educational activities on land used to produce farm products.

People moving into farm areas often complain and even sue over odors, dust, noise and one's personal perception of unsightliness. Farmers must act responsibly to help reduce the likelihood

their operations might cause a nuisance situation. The Right to Farm Law allows farmers to continue to farm without the constant fear of nuisance suits from neighbors.

The burden of proof should be on the complaining party to prove a farm is a nuisance rather than requiring the farmer to prove it is not.

Any producer successful in a nuisance lawsuit should receive court and legal costs to be paid by the plaintiff.

ANNEXATION

We support the sections of the growth management law designed to protect the property rights of farmers. The Tennessee Farm Bureau Board of Directors should closely monitor the law to ensure the best interest of Tennessee agriculture is served. Tennessee's growth management law was passed in 1998 to provide a twenty-year growth plan framework for each county. The Tennessee General Assembly should study the strengths and weaknesses of the current law to determine how to move forward after 2018 with a policy that is best for all landowners.

We commend the Legislature for abolishing annexation by ordinance. Before annexation, citizens in the area affected should have the right to vote to be annexed or to remain outside the municipality. Land in agricultural use should only be annexed with consent of the farm owner. Farm Bureau supports the right to a jury trial in annexation disputes.

Municipalities should be restricted to how much land they can annex in a given period. State funded grants should not be allowed as a means to offset the high costs incurred by municipalities installing utility lines simply to lay claim to rural areas. Strip annexation of highways leading out of municipalities should be curtailed. County governments should not have the undue burden to provide improvement of services within annexed communities where the municipality should be responsible.

An election should be called for after population has been changed by 15% due to annexation. Newly annexed areas should not be taxed for any debt of the original municipal area.

If farmland is annexed, no city property taxes should be collected as long as the land remains in production agriculture. Working family farms within city limits are an asset to the livelihood of the cities' citizens. Every effort should be made to preserve these working farms when the landowner wants to continue to farm. Farm owners should always be consulted as to their intent to continue farming before annexing into a city limit. We encourage local governments to voluntarily work more closely with farmers to develop incentives to promote the continuation of family farms.

If consolidation of county and municipal governments occurs, separate taxing districts should be established. Rural areas should not have to pay for urban services they do not receive.

Citizens should have the ability to de-annex by referendum to remove affected properties from a municipality, including properties in greenbelt.

LAND USE PLANNING

We oppose encroachment of federal, state and local governments on Tennessee agricultural and forest lands. Public entities should never be allowed to condemn more property than is actually needed for a project. Former owners should have the first right of refusal of condemned property that is no longer needed. Prime farm and forestland should not be condemned when other lands are available and well suited. We oppose this type of taking of private property. Landowners have the major responsibility for its development and conservation. Sale of development rights, land trust, and/or conservation easements should always be a voluntary option for interested landowners. The right to sell land must remain in the hands of landowners.

Municipalities and utility authorities should not have excessive power of eminent domain to take property in another jurisdiction without permission of the county commission of the affected area. We urge legislation to limit the condemnation authority of municipalities. Eminent domain should only be used in cases of great public need and when willing sellers cannot be found. Eminent domain authority should not be granted to private, for profit organizations.

Non-profit organizations should not be able to purchase land with tax exempt dollars for the purpose of selling land for a profit.

We oppose federal land use planning. Planning can best be accomplished at the local level of government and by private landowners.

Several local communities have used zoning very effectively in accomplishing orderly growth and designating land use to certain areas. Local planning can save tax dollars and protect landowners if local people make decisions. In those counties with zoning, local farmers should have adequate representation on planning commissions, zoning boards and appeal boards.

We oppose federal, state or local legislation imposing land use regulations to qualify for federal grants and loans or to participate in other government programs. No government agency should have the right to control land use without specific legislative authority. Local governments should not use zoning as a tool to regulate agricultural practices.

Forced limitations on the use of land are a direct cost to the landowner, a depreciation of his most valuable asset. If society is served better through any forced limitation of land use, landowners should be adequately compensated for the loss of property value.

Tennessee is losing valuable farmland to urbanization. The agricultural district law and farmland trust are both voluntary tools for the protection of farmland. Efforts to educate farmers on the availability of these options should be enhanced.

Protecting prime agricultural land from development should be a top priority. Decision makers should carefully consider the consequences of each proposed project, which erodes Tennessee's valuable farmland resources. Such uses should receive a low priority in consideration of state funding needs.

In court cases where the landowner is awarded a higher value for his condemned property than was originally offered, all legal fees should be paid by the entity condemning the land.

Court cases involving eminent domain issues should be dealt with expeditiously.

TRESPASS

The use of private property for hunting or other activities by persons other than the owner is a privilege to be used by permission and is not a basic right. Tennessee's trespass law considers private property, whether posted or not, closed to the public unless consent is given by the landowner. We believe permission should be in writing from the landowner. We urge strict enforcement of trespass laws and urge courts to assess fines or other punishment sufficient to deter trespassing. Regulatory authorities should be required to follow the rules of due process when conducting investigations especially when entering the property of private landowners.

Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs) and other motorized vehicles found in a trespass situation should be impounded.

A valid Tennessee hunting license and written permission should be required for hunting or shooting on private property, regardless of the presence or absence of "posted" or "no trespassing" signs. It is the hunter's responsibility, when written permission is given, to locate property boundaries. Written permission should include a date and time as well as the individuals who will be hunting. Violations should result in enforcement and prosecution by Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) and/or local

law enforcement officials. Written permission should not imply any liability to the landowner.

We recommend the TWRA more diligently promote public awareness programs concerning all trespass problems.

LIABILITY

Frivolous lawsuits, extreme awards and settlements have driven up the costs of products and services, especially medical services. Seeking justice has become a game of chance and disgraces the integrity of our judicial system and constitution.

We support the Tennessee Civil Justice Act of 2011 because it establishes some much needed common sense, tort reform provisions including a cap for noneconomic damages and a cap on punitive damages. The act enacts several changes to the substantive, remedial, and procedural law of Tennessee and amends the Tennessee Medical Malpractice Act, the Tennessee Consumer Protection Act, and the Tennessee Product Liability Act. A court challenge to some of its provisions is likely.

A person should only be responsible for the damages he/she actually causes. Reasonable limitations should be placed on attorney's fees generated by lawsuits. When lawsuits are denied and found to be frivolous, plaintiffs should be financially liable for court costs and economic and social damages caused by the lawsuits. Proposed laws and regulations that add new liability to individuals and their efforts to earn a living should be opposed.

Farmers should not be liable when they comply with label instructions for chemical use. Farmer responsibility lies in the proper storage, application, and disposal of the chemical according to recommended label directions.

To discourage fraud and collusion, a person should not be allowed to sue his or her spouse in a civil action for negligence.

Current law does not allow farmers to recoup losses resulting from the action of special interest groups and nonprofit organizations. Too often extremist groups together with media sensationalism make accusations with false data that are proven wrong after damage has been done to the farmer(s). These groups should be made liable and held accountable for their actions.

State law should protect the rights of property owners in the following instances:

1. Property owners should not be liable for damage to, injuries to, or the death of persons who enter property to commit a crime.
2. Property owners should be exempt from liability for injury to a person when entry upon the property is for the benefit of the visitor.
3. Courts should uphold "hold-harmless" agreements between landlords and tenants, hunters and other visitors to private property.

Cattle producers are encouraged to implement provisions in state law establishing limited liability for the inherent risks associated with bovine activities. Producers are not liable for any injury, loss, damage, or death of a person resulting from the inherent risks of bovine activities, if he/she does the following:

1. Posts and maintains a specific warning sign with the language and requirements as defined by the bill.
2. Maintains proper fences and enclosures as defined by Chapter 8 of Title 44 of the Tennessee Code Annotated.
3. Does not commit an act or omission that constitutes willful or wanton disregard for the safety of a person.

LAW AND ORDER

We support government by law, not by men. We must adhere to the law ourselves and have respect for properly constituted authority. In our search for solutions to social and economic prob-

lems we cannot flaunt laws, no matter how worthwhile our motives may be. Laws protecting private and public property rights must be strictly enforced.

We are more concerned about the welfare and safety of law-abiding citizens than the comfort and convenience of criminals. All persons convicted of crimes should be punished and pay restitution and the victim be given priority in the restitution process over other fees or costs.

We are concerned about the permissive attitude of our courts and their lenient handling of criminals. Legislators, juries, judges, and parole boards must recognize society must be protected first. Victims of crime have rights that must be preserved. Victims' rights are more important than the rights of criminals.

One convicted of a felony should forfeit all rights of free citizenship until his/her sentence has been served. They should not be allowed to vote or hold public office during the term of their sentence.

We support work programs for prisoners. The government and/or private entity responsible for prisoners should be liable for property and personal damages done by escapees or by inmates on work release programs. A person committing a crime while released on bond and awaiting trial for another crime should lose the right to further release on bond and be tried as a habitual criminal.

We support capital punishment. Swift and just punishment is an effective deterrent to crime. A time limit for appeals should be no more than five years.

More severe fines and punishment should be authorized for illegal removal of serial numbers or other identification numbers on motorized vehicles and machinery.

Violent crimes committed by juveniles must be addressed with tougher measures. Violent and repeat offenders under 18 should be treated as adults. They should be immediately transferred to adult court despite their age and face the more serious penalties applied to adult offenders.

A definite punishment, not probation, should be given to youthful offenders. With property crimes, the punishment should include restitution by the offender to the damaged individual. Juvenile crimes involving drugs should have as a part of the sentence mandatory participation in drug testing and rehabilitation.

Law enforcement officers should have adequate protection from liability they may incur in the just performance of their duty. Law enforcement officers should be required to wear bright fluorescent vests when directing traffic in emergencies.

Any reductions of parole eligibility requirements made to comply with court ordered prison population levels should be restored when Tennessee makes more cells available. Time served to qualify for parole should not be permanently reduced.

New penal facilities should include sufficient facilities for all inmates to engage in useful and productive work. Each inmate should pay the cost of keep. Vocational rehabilitation should give inmates skills and habits that help to create a responsible person.

We oppose the complete privatization of the state prison system.

We support strong anti-terrorism laws and the empowerment of law enforcement with the tools and resources necessary to combat terrorism.

Human trafficking and slavery is a growing problem across the world, including the United States, and is becoming more prevalent in rural areas. We oppose the harboring of any person against their will or any human trafficking.

We are concerned with the growing number of both ferrous and non-ferrous metal thefts across the state. Metal theft of any kind is a crime and should be prosecuted to its fullest extent. We support the strengthening of metal theft laws and reciprocal agreements in bordering states. Weaker laws in surrounding states should not be an incentive to sell stolen metal across state lines.

We believe stakeholders including law enforcement, scrap

metal dealers and property owners should work together to develop workable solutions to scrap metal theft.

We support the work of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Ag Crime Unit and encourage continued coordination with law enforcement agencies to utilize and enhance their unique investigation activity and focus for agricultural crimes.

TENNESSEE JUDICIAL SELECTION

We support an independent and qualified judiciary. A system such as the "Tennessee Plan" should be maintained to ensure partisan politics and campaign fundraising do not influence the selection and retention of judges.

Further, we applaud the successful 2014 constitutional amendment that protects our merit-based judicial selection system.

ALCOHOL & DRUG ABUSE

Alcohol and drug abuse and illegal manufacturing and trafficking are main causes of crime. Preventing drug and alcohol abuse benefits everyone. Therefore, we support additional funding for drug and alcohol educational programs in all communities and schools. We encourage county and state law enforcement agencies to aggressively address the drug problem facing our communities by following all reliable leads of suspect drug activity and making appropriate arrests. We commend lawmakers for establishing stiffer penalties for those who manufacture, sell, use and/or possess synthetic drugs in Tennessee.

Heroin and other opioid abuse is a major problem in many Tennessee communities. New strategies in fighting this potential epidemic are needed.

Methamphetamine abuse is destroying lives and families. The methamphetamine problem, including the manufacture, trafficking and abuse must be dealt with swiftly.

Innocent property owners should not be liable for the hazardous waste clean-up associated with clandestine meth labs. Agricultural supplies should not be used for illegal activity such as drugs or making explosive devices. Theft of agricultural supplies for the purpose of producing illegal drugs has become a problem in areas of our state. We support local authorities monitoring unusual purchases of ingredients used in illegal drug manufacturing. These crimes should be considered illegal drug activity and not minor theft. Those guilty should be prosecuted to the maximum allowable under drug related charges.

We commend the Meth Task Force for developing a strategy for dealing with the meth problem. Tennessee has made major progress in combating methamphetamine manufacturing and use since the state enacted the Meth-Free Tennessee Act restricting the sale of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. However, in the past year Tennessee has experienced a significant increase in meth lab seizures and reversed the downward trend established in 2005. We are concerned with the increase. Meth producers are employing people to travel from store to store and state to state purchasing or "smurfing" pseudoephedrine and ephedrine. We encourage continued emphasis by state and local law enforcement in combating the new problems.

Society in general and our youth in particular are suffering greatly at the hands of drug traffickers.

Measures should be sought to eliminate from the Internet all instructions and/or demonstrations on the making of drugs and other illegal devices.

Manufacturers of hydrocodone, oxycodone, codeine, benzodiazepines, and meperidine have admitted these drugs are addictive. Therefore, we urge the medical profession to prescribe these drugs only when a patient's pain is excessive and other remedies have been exhausted. The amount of dosage should be prescribed

responsibly and in a very limited manner as with morphine, recognizing the addictive nature of these drugs.

We oppose the legalization of recreational marijuana.

The most accessible drug of all is alcohol. The deglamorization of alcoholic beverages in all areas including advertising should be initiated.

Driving under the influence is a reckless and violent criminal act. We oppose efforts to weaken Tennessee DUI statutes. We support legislation to make first time DUI offenders subject to a thirty-day confiscation of their vehicle or be required to install an alcohol interlock device. They should be fined and made to pay for wrecker and storage charges. Second offenders should be fined more and have their vehicles confiscated and sold at auction. They should also be charged for any storage and towing fees. DUI offenders, clearly identified, should remove trash along the roadsides or do other public work. Litter would get picked up and jails would be less crowded.

We believe Tennessee's open-container law should apply to all passengers in a vehicle. Currently, Tennessee law restricts drivers only. Federal safety rules recommend all open alcoholic beverage be prohibited inside a vehicle. Because state law does not meet the federal recommendation, Tennessee does not receive a full annual allocation and loses thousands of dollars of federal transportation money.

GUN CONTROL

The second amendment to the Constitution gives people the right to keep and bear arms. We strongly oppose any effort to regulate the purchase, ownership or use of firearms and ammunition for law-abiding "mentally competent" citizens. We strongly oppose any attempt to undermine the second amendment through U.N. or international treaties. Treaties of this kind would undermine American sovereignty.

We support firearms safety programs for youth as well as adults.

Private property rights are a bedrock principle to our freedom and prosperity. We are strong advocates of well-defined and enforced private property rights. No law should erode or allow landowners rights to fade to the background.

Carrying a gun on private property by permit holders should be considered acceptable unless and/or until a landowner exercises his or her right to deny guns on the landowner's property.

Landowners should assume no liability for the action of gun owners.

ENERGY

The United States needs an energy policy that emphasizes expanded production of all forms of energy, including nuclear and hydrogen energy and the development of new forms of energy. Conservation alone is not the solution to our energy problem.

Market demand for energy will provide incentives for increased energy production and expanded research efforts. However, in the absence of truly competitive energy markets effective government regulations of price and terms are a necessity.

Impactical regulations at all levels of government create additional energy costs and discourage the development of energy sources.

We support nuclear energy as a clean, safe and affordable energy source. The United States must be realistic as we chart a course to guarantee future generations a self-sufficient energy supply. Environmental concerns, land area and lack of technology are just a few of the shortcomings preventing coal, solar and wind energy from being the reliable sources of energy this country will demand if we are to remain a world industrial leader. The United States should be aggressive in research and development and ex-

pansion of our nuclear energy capabilities.

We oppose government rationing of energy supplies, except for national emergencies. To the greatest extent possible, agriculture should receive uninterrupted supplies if fuel must be rationed.

Government and private industry should work together in Tennessee to develop the market in new areas and develop methods by which supplies may be fed into the total energy supply system and made available to our citizens. We support upgrading the electric grid infrastructure to ensure security, reliability, and survivability.

Natural gas provides an opportunity for farmers to diversify energy sources. Recent growth in natural gas supply makes it cost effective. We support the expansion of natural gas infrastructure throughout Tennessee to meet potential needs in agriculture.

The conversion of poultry litter and other animal waste for power generation and value-added products, such as liquid fertilizer, is showing great promise. We support aggressive research to convert such waste to a useable form of energy.

Methane capture opportunities for energy recovery exist in landfills all across the state and nation. We encourage more local governments, utilities and private industry to explore the options and available beneficial use options.

The United States has huge energy resources. Tennessee Farm Bureau strongly supports increasing domestic production of all energy resources. We support the use of hydraulic fracturing to extract natural gas and oil. We believe the development of new technology and research in hydraulic fracturing is of vital importance to maintaining our domestic energy supplies.

We also support legislation and research emphasizing clean coal technology. The more industries can find ways to use the abundant coal supply in a cleaner way, the less pressure there should be on natural gas demand.

We strongly support and encourage offshore oil drilling, drilling for oil in Alaska and in the oil shale areas of the western U.S., all to be done in an environmentally friendly way in order to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. While much can be done in the area of conservation (U.S. agriculture has become 30% more energy efficient over the last 20 years), this nation cannot "conserve" its way out of this crisis. It must be a combination of conservation, alternative energy sources and a significant increase in domestic production of traditional energy sources such as oil and natural gas.

RENEWABLE FUELS

The United States must become less dependent on unstable and overpriced foreign sources of fuel. A valuable option is the production of ethanol and biodiesel from various commodities and crop residues.

More promotion and research should be placed into alternative energy sources. Farmers have the potential to provide clean, abundant, renewable energy sources for our state and nation. The same visionary ambition and technology that advanced our nation as the leader in food and fiber production can place our state and nation to the forefront of renewable energy production and use.

Federal renewable energy policies have developed the ethanol industry. Continuing the federal incentives for ethanol will nurture this industry. Congress should extend the tax incentive for biodiesel. Incentives taken at the blender level should be passed on to the actual user in order to lower the price and promote use. Biodiesel also has the potential to make a major contribution to our energy supplies, as well as to cleaner air and water.

Farm Bureau should aggressively support any legislation that provides favorable economic conditions to expand the ethanol and biodiesel industry as well as increasing the Renewable Fuels Standard. As production of ethanol and biodiesel expands in the coming years, Farm Bureau should make every effort to support the availability of these products at the retail level.

We encourage farmers, foresters, state and local governments and all consumers to request fuels that are at least a blend of farm grown products. The Tennessee Air Quality Control Board should promote the use of renewable fuels to improve air quality. State incentives should be developed to encourage the use of renewable fuels in local government vehicles and mass transit. We should depend on our domestic agricultural resources, rather than imported petroleum products.

We endorse the "25 x '25 vision" of Agriculture's Role in Ensuring U.S. Energy Security which reads: "Agriculture will provide 25 percent of the total energy consumed in the United States by 2025 while continuing to produce abundant, safe and affordable food and fiber".

While a variety of renewable energy resources, including wind, hydro, solar, and geothermal, will be needed to meet this goal, we are particularly interested in the utilization of biomass from agriculture and forestry.

Ethanol has helped develop new markets for commodities and reduced the national grain surplus. We support and welcome this industry in Tennessee and encourage utilization of locally-produced commodities. Tennessee ethanol plants also produce valuable by-products such as dried distillers grain, corn oil, and CO2 gas products. This further diversifies the value chain of corn and provides food and feed products for consumers and farmers.

We support state and local efforts to locate renewable fuel plants in and adjacent to Tennessee. We applaud the State Legislature for the new age cooperative law which will enhance the potential for local farmers to realize better commodity prices and also to participate in the ownership of the facilities. We commend and support the University of Tennessee and Oak Ridge National Laboratories for their research on alternative energy and their comprehensive look at both the agricultural sector and the state economic impacts.

We recognize the effort and assistance of USDA Rural Development in providing grant funds for Tennessee alternative fuel projects. We commend the producers, grant writers and entrepreneurs who have taken the lead in these endeavors.

We urge TDA to monitor all ethanol and biodiesel sold in the state to ensure that it meets or exceeds American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards.

RURAL UTILITY SERVICES

Utility districts created under the Utility District Act of 1937 furnish utility services to rural areas, benefiting the health and welfare of farmers and other rural people.

Many Tennessee communities do not have access to public water supplies. We believe there should be a comprehensive effort to determine ways to extend public water to these rural communities.

For many years' annexation laws have allowed municipalities to annex adjacent areas. Often annexed residents are not justly compensated for the loss of their utility system to municipal control.

Under the Growth Management Act (Public Chapter 1101) guidelines are set for the annexation of a rural area by a municipality. Before annexing, cities must formulate a plan of services that addresses utility services along with other services.

We oppose the passage of any law allowing cities or units of local government to assume control of water and wastewater utility districts. If this happens, we support a just and fair arrangement to compensate utility districts having territory removed or services taken by city annexation or by the consolidation of governments.

Easements or right-of-ways obtained by the public or private sectors should not be committed to any new or additional purpose during its original usage without consent of the landowner underlying the easement or right-of-way. If the easement or right-of-way

is abandoned, the land should revert to the original landowner or assignee.

When a landowner gives a right-of-way or easement to a utility, the landowner should be notified in writing of the property rights he is forfeiting by granting easement to the utility.

Landowners should be notified when the utility personnel and their contractors enter private property for purposes other than routine maintenance or emergency repairs. Utilities and their contractors should be responsible in leaving the landowners' property as found.

Landowners who have granted easements should not be charged for alterations to the use of such easements.

Many utility boards receive grants and bonds for construction of new lines and relocation of existing lines. Utility districts should not bear the financial burden of moving a utility line when another entity causes the move.

To ensure customers receive fair treatment, rural utility district boards should have district customers as board members.

UTILITY REGULATION

American homes and businesses need efficient telephone and other utility services at reasonable rates. The Tennessee Regulatory Authority should encourage efficient operation and technological innovation by the various regulated service corporations.

Farm Bureau should participate in both state and national hearings on availability or cost of telephone service to rural people. Farm Bureau should actively debate the role the communication industry plays in the lives of farm people.

Deregulation of the electrical power generating industry may be inevitable. Rural customers must be concerned about deregulation because they could be significantly impacted. Universal service to all rural customers must continue after deregulation at competitive rates. If the legislative bodies do not carefully consider universal service to rural areas, cost to farmers and rural homeowners could be substantially higher. We are also concerned that new generators of power will "cherry-pick" large commercial power consumers to the detriment of farms and homeowners. As deregulation is considered, lawmakers should establish a mechanism for financial support to assist those rural utility service providers that have a high infrastructure investment debt and/or a high cost service area. Congress and the Legislature should be vigilant about assuring the electrical power industry can deliver constant and reliable service.

Due to the prevalence of wireless communication in the telecommunications industry, wireless phone service providers should be held to the same standards of service and service area as conventional telephone companies.

Rural residents lag the rest of the nation when it comes to use of high-speed Internet connections. Although the gap between rural and non-rural home broadband adoption is narrowing, there are still substantial gaps. Rural residents need speeds, availability and affordability in parity with urban and suburban areas.

We support access, education and adoption concerning broadband connection in rural areas to enhance the lives of both rural homeowners and farmers. We commend the passage of the 2017 Broadband Accessibility Act. We further support those deploying this technology, whether wireless or wireline by encouraging tax incentives, grants and/or affordable funding to providers of the service. Careful consideration must be given to any grants, incentives or regulation; however, to avoid, just as in electric power industry, potential "cherry picking" that would ultimately be detrimental to rural homeowners and farmers. Rural property owners have depended on the cooperative system to provide essential services to rural areas. Electric cooperatives and rural telephone cooperatives are key to providing broadband service to unserved and underserved areas. Electric cooperatives can now provide

broadband to cooperative members. Safeguards should remain to avoid overbuilding into rural telephone cooperative service areas.

TVA

The Tennessee Valley Authority provides electrical energy to almost all Tennesseans. Rural electrification helped farmers greatly improve their standard of living and develop the resources in the region. We appreciate the leadership TVA has provided in flood control and in fertilizer research and promotion.

Recreational management of impoundments through operational changes has diverted TVA from its original goals of flood control, navigation, and hydroelectric power generation. TVA should return to these original goals. Allowing for storage capacity in reservoirs is essential to protect farm lands from flooding during heavy storm events.

TVA Debt

Much of TVA's debt has accumulated because of projects designed to benefit the entire country. The power produced by TVA aided in the development of the atomic bomb, war material, munitions and fertilizer research. The debt has been accumulated by these projects and also unfinished failed projects such as the nuclear plants. TVA ratepayers should not bear the entire burden of a debt created to benefit the nation as a whole. TVA should consider debt reduction to be among its most important priorities. Farm Bureau should promote the formation of a coalition of the seven states in the TVA region that would work toward a fair debt payment plan.

Although performance-based employee bonuses serve to attract and retain good TVA employees in an industry dominated by private, for-profit power companies, we believe with the current debt load and economy TVA should strive to lead the way in restraining excessive bonuses.

Nuclear Power

Problems with TVA's nuclear power projects resulted in several unfinished structures. In the current condition, these projects continue to cost TVA consumers. We urge TVA to reconsider their decision on unfinished nuclear sites. If determined not to be used for nuclear purposes, then alternate beneficial consumer uses for these unfinished projects should be considered. This research by TVA may be of great value in years to come and avoid any nuclear disasters. Alternative non-power uses should be fully funded from sources other than power revenues.

Deregulation

TVA was not designed to compete with for-profit power companies. TVA is a unique distributor of power with debt accumulated from non-power projects. If deregulation occurs, TVA should not be prevented from marketing power outside the Valley and other power producers should be allowed to come into the Valley. TVA must be allowed to compete fairly in the total marketplace if it is to remain a reliable power generator.

TVA Lands and Private Property

Some TVA activities on private lands are infringing on property rights.

Landowners should be notified when the TVA and or private contractor personnel enter private property for purposes other than routine maintenance or emergency repairs. Utilities should be responsible in leaving the landowners' property as found.

TVA's Shoreline Management Policy is an example of overreaching environmental protection. Residential shoreline owners and farm property owners are being subjected to invasive regulations. This type of regulation is a taking of private property without compensation. TVA lake levels should be left at reasonable levels during summer months to protect adjoining agricultural landowners. Water levels below dams should be monitored before releases to avoid prolonged flooding and shoreline erosion. The flooding on private property beyond TVA's flowage easements is too frequent.

This trend reveals a weakness within TVA's current management plan because it does not demonstrate flood control. TVA should seek solutions to alleviate this increasing problem for farmers. We urge TVA to give the highest possible priority consideration to the agricultural operations within a floodplain when establishing water level fluctuation plans. We applaud TVA for recent efforts to work with farmers and landowners to abate the frequency of flooding on agricultural land.

We oppose:

1. Any additional authority over private landowners without congressional approval.
2. Restricting livestock access to rivers and lakes for water purposes.
3. Efforts to promote floodplain zoning county by county since the potential uses of private property are forfeited.
4. Requiring permits for farmers irrigating for agricultural purposes.
5. Condemnation of private property unless the public need clearly justifies the landowner's loss.
6. Creation of a wildlife preserve, greenway or government-owned river corridor from TVA- owned lands along any river.

Land Transfers

Thousands of families have been uprooted from their land for the public good. Generations were deprived of the potential income and value of their property. TVA has an ethical responsibility to ensure transfers of TVA owned lands remain for the public good and not for private benefit. We support TVA's policy (adopted November 2006) to discontinue selling lakefront property for residential or commercial development. In any case in which TVA owned lands are to be sold or transferred, the following principles should be followed:

1. Financial losses to local governments should be minimized and/or compensated.
2. Fairness to farmers and adjoining landowners should be a top priority.
3. Lands remaining in public ownership should be available for agricultural leases whenever reasonably possible.
4. Lands condemned for one purpose should not be converted to another use. Such lands should be returned to former owners or sold, preferably with a first right of refusal for former owners. The purchase price for original landowners should not exceed the price paid when the land was taken plus interest, if purchase and interest does not exceed current land value.
5. The effects of any proposed public use of the lands on adjoining landowners should be considered. Public agencies accepting ownership of these lands should be responsible for fencing, posting and other measures necessary to prevent undue problems of trespass or wildlife damage.
6. TVA property should be considered for some acceptable public uses, such as, barge facilities and walking trails, etc. Utilizing TVA lands for such purposes is preferable to removing additional property from private ownership and the property tax rolls.
7. Before lands are transferred out of TVA ownership, easements to guarantee access to landlocked tracts or water sources should be granted at no or nominal cost.
8. TVA lands should not be converted to wildlife and/or recreational use without thorough consideration of all costs, including the cost of the land (at its potential sale value), costs (including lost tax revenues)

- to local governments, and costs to adjoining landowners.
9. Boards created to manage TVA lands turned over to state ownership should have local representation. When management duties are assigned to an established statewide board, a locally appointed advisory committee should be established to make recommendations regarding management decisions.

HIGHWAYS AND ROADS

Good highways and roads are essential to future economic development and are of vital interest to rural people. Maintaining and improving existing roads should have priority over new road construction. As in the case of the proposed I-69 in West Tennessee, using existing roads can save many acres of farmland. Economic impact studies should include the impact of the loss of farmland and the resulting impact on the various service industries. We appreciate the improved responsiveness by TDOT to the environmental and economic effect of roads.

When any new road is planned or major changes are to be done to an existing road, TDOT should be required to do a comprehensive and thorough Environmental Impact Study (EIS). This study should address economic impact to the community and established business, environment issues and alternatives, such as improving existing roads. Productive farms in the path of such roads should be considered as a business. The findings of the EIS, economically and environmentally, should apply to that farm the same as any other business.

Preservation of farmland should be a major consideration in the planning of new roads. Wherever possible, new road routes should run along property lines rather than through the middle of a farmed tract. State policy must make TDOT a good steward of our farmland, one of our fastest disappearing natural resources.

Landowners must be fairly compensated when farmland is taken for a road project. Compensation should include the cost of relocating farm buildings and operations, and increased operating costs, such as the cost of providing water to tracts that are isolated by the new road from a traditional water supply. When only a portion of the farm is taken, the compensation should not be discounted for the increase in the value of the remaining land. In the event a farm parcel is divided by a road project and a portion of the property no longer meets greenbelt acreage qualifications, the smaller portion should receive a separate parcel number and retain greenbelt property tax status.

We urge the Legislature to strengthen the highway, bridge, and rural road program with a high priority for adequate funding. Funding for road construction should be accomplished on a pay-as-you-go basis instead of bonded indebtedness. We will oppose any efforts to shift revenues to interstate highways, major roads and streets or transit systems at the expense of our rural road system. We oppose the construction of new federal highways within the state which have questionable benefit.

All monies appropriated for rural roads should be supervised closely to assure their expenditure for the purpose authorized. We oppose the distribution of road funds on a population basis.

Rural road right-of-ways are of great concern to rural people. We recommend city, county, and state governments be required to mow, pave and maintain the road and right-of-way making visibility at intersections a priority. Property taken for a road should be taken off the tax roll. If the roadbed is changed or abandoned the land should revert to the original landowner or assignee, where possible.

State and local highway departments and railroads should give special attention to clearing road right-of-ways in areas where excessive growth of vegetation and trees reduces visibility and creates hazardous driving conditions. We urge TDOT, local highway

departments, utility services and railroads to use extreme caution when spraying near agricultural crops. If damage occurs due to spraying, the farmer should be monetarily compensated by the respective transportation departments and utilities.

Where TDOT or other government agencies have agreed to build and maintain a fence on or parallel to a road right-of-way boundary bordering agricultural lands, the fence should be sufficient to restrain common farm livestock (including cattle and horses). In cases where the landowner or livestock owner has notified TDOT of areas that need fence repair, the owner should not be liable for damages caused by livestock that escape due to the poor condition of these fences.

We encourage rural residents to locate their mailboxes in a manner and location that will, to the extent practical, accommodate oversized equipment while also observing postal service requirements. We urge construction of frequent pull-off sections on two lane roads to allow traffic to pass farm equipment.

TRANSPORTATION

Agriculture must have good access to highway, water and rail transportation to move commodities and supplies. More flexible rules for rail cars and transport trucks would benefit the farm economy.

We continue our support of the Port of Cates Landing in West Tennessee and believe it will contribute broadly to the West Tennessee economy. The port sits on the only developable site on the Mississippi River above the 100-year flood plain between Memphis and Cairo, Ill and will be accessible to barge traffic year round. The project is drawing interest from shippers and manufacturers throughout the U.S. because of its potential to serve as an anchor for intermodal transportation and other businesses.

The Mississippi River is extremely important to U.S. agriculture. More than one billion bushels of grain (about 60 percent of all grain exports) move to export markets via the Mississippi River each year. River/water transportation is one of the most environmentally friendly, resource efficient and globally competitive methods of grain transportation available. Many of our international competitors maintain an overall lower cost of production in commodities but the freight cost advantage of our river system plays a significant role in keeping our exports competitive. We must maintain and grow this freight advantage to maintain our competitiveness. We must renew our commitment to maintaining the entire river system. We support the maintenance and improvements of our lock and dam systems and waterways. Many of them are unsafe and not functioning to their potential. The Inland Waterway Trust Fund should be reauthorized with a solid fee mechanism that provides sufficient funding for a long-term repair and maintenance schedule.

The carrying capacity of one 15-barge tow eliminates the need for 870 semi-trailer trucks to travel our nation's highways, reducing traffic congestion. Barges operate at 10 percent of the cost of trucks and 40 percent of the cost of trains.

Every effort should be made to allow the most efficient use of all forms of transportation. We support the agricultural exemption in the Interstate Commerce Act. It should be expanded to include farm equipment and production supplies.

We support the agricultural exemption in the Commercial Drivers' License Law. We appreciate Congress allowing states the authority to allow regulatory relief from Commercial Drivers' License requirements for agricultural suppliers and custom harvesters when traveling to and from farms. However, the agricultural exemption mileage limitation should be expanded to reflect trends in the industry's transportation needs.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations should be made more consistent pertaining to miles traveled and weight limits for farm vehicles.

Enforcement officers and other officials who deal with motor vehicles should be informed and educated on the laws and exemptions that apply to agricultural vehicles.

We encourage uniformity in maximum truck weights and lengths in all states to achieve more efficient use of equipment and facilities. We further recommend apportioned tags be purchased in the home county of the truck owner.

If truck weight laws are to be enforced by fees for overweight trucks, we favor a system that imposes higher per pound fees as excess weight increases.

We oppose rural road weight restrictions that may hamper the farmer's ability to transport supplies or commodities. Tennessee's maximum licensed vehicle weight for farm and forestry vehicles should be consistent across all county and state roads. Farm Bureau should work to establish a clear right of farm-to-market use of rural roads.

Acts by neighboring states to unilaterally impose taxes and fees on Tennessee trucks should be rectified. We recommend Tennessee transportation officials formulate reciprocal agreements with adjoining states to allow the interstate transport of agricultural products within one hundred and fifty air miles of the farm.

We oppose legislation mandating excessive increases in Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards for new cars, pickup trucks and vans. Higher standards will result in even smaller, lighter cars and trucks. Smaller vehicles are useful to some people, but they do not meet the needs of farmers who have to carry or tow heavy loads over rough terrain.

Posted speed limits should be consistent for all vehicles.

We support legislation to prevent railroads from closing crossings if the crossing is the only access a landowner or farmer has to the property, or if the closure adversely affects the farm operations.

General aviation airports provide access to many rural communities and are paramount to our nation's economy. Our aviation infrastructure represents an important public benefit. State and federal oversight should be in place to ensure it serves communities of all sizes.

SLOW MOVING EQUIPMENT ON PUBLIC ROADS

We endorse the voluntary use of slow-moving vehicle (SMV) signs on all farm machinery traveling on public roads. This emblem when displayed warns motorists approaching from the rear and gives them sufficient time to avoid accidents.

The Tennessee Farm Bureau and UT Extension should do more to teach farmers and non-farmers as well the proper use of SMV signs. Voluntary use of SMV signs by farmers can greatly reduce accidents. Improper use of SMV signs should not be permitted. Motorists must only relate this emblem to slow moving vehicles.

We helped develop the current requirement for safety hitches for farm equipment traveling on public roads. We oppose mandated inspection programs for farm equipment.

The law requiring slow-moving vehicles (such as farm tractors) to pull off the roadway to allow following traffic to proceed should be abolished. This law allows undue opportunity for harassment. However, we urge all slow-moving vehicle drivers to extend this courtesy whenever possible. Often no safe place exists to pull-off no matter how much traffic backs up. If the Legislature continues to support this rule, adequate appropriation should be made for construction of safe pull-off areas for slow-moving vehicles.

With today's much larger equipment, every effort should be made to have all equipment folded to their narrowest transport width, including the removal of wide combine headers, before entering public roadways, unless they have adequate escorts in front of and behind the machinery. Tennessee law should not restrict the transport of oversized agricultural equipment along roadways. Farm Bureau should explore legal remedies and safety guidelines

to reduce exposure to civil liability and traffic law violations when transporting equipment.

Tennessee law should allow the transport of hay to accommodate two round bale widths.

Farmers should make certain all flashing, warning lights, and SMV signs are in proper working order and consider using escorts when extremely dangerous conditions exist.

We urge the Tennessee Farm Bureau News, the Tennessee Home and Farm Magazine, and other media to continue an educational campaign to help both the farmer and motorist to understand and cope with this situation.

V - NATURAL RESOURCES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Farmers have a deep and abiding interest in protection of the environment based upon philosophical beliefs, and also practical self-interest.

Environmental regulations, whether by air, water, noise or visual standards, should recognize the essential nature of efficient and safe use of organic matter, pesticides and fertilizers as a basic and natural part of agricultural production.

Agricultural operations should be excluded from the Comprehensive Environmental Recovery, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) and Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act (EPCRA). The requirements of these laws are too stringent and inappropriate for farming operations.

We request that agriculture receive the same consideration for special permits as any other industry or governmental body.

TDEC and other regulatory agencies should accept NRCS designed and approved plans for permits.

Agriculture should have more representation on the Board of Water Quality, Oil and Gas.

We encourage county Farm Bureau leaders and Farm Bureau staff to monitor the activities of the Alliance for the Cumberlands and other local environmental working groups. Such groups are increasingly becoming a voice on policy matters regarding environmental and economic concerns. We express "caution" as others propose ways to "protect" the land and resources owned by farmers. We encourage all farmers within the region to listen, evaluate and communicate with such groups and their local Farm Bureaus and TFBF on issues related to policies and activities of such groups.

We support continued oversight of the EPA and its authority and funding. We appreciate the new, common-sense, approach of the EPA leadership and their efforts to protect not only the environment but the rights of the regulated community.

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT & SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

We support the widespread promotion and use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for reducing costs, risks, liability and total dependence on farm chemicals. IPM can reduce the risk of output loss, the per-unit cost of production and liability from chemical damages. IPM is a selective use of pesticides because it targets use where problems have been identified.

We encourage continued research and development of pesticides that degrade more rapidly, are less environmentally persistent and are compatible with accepted IPM practices.

Our support of IPM principles should not be construed to mean we support enforced hiring of individuals or organizations farmers do not need nor can afford.

We are concerned with the open-ended, vague definition of both IPM and Sustainable Agriculture. Because of the lack of a consensus definition, the interpretation by farmers and environmental extremists is completely different. We encourage the development of a clear definition of both IPM and sustainable agriculture. The

elimination of agricultural chemicals is not our goal. The wise use, including careful timing and optimum application rates, is the key.

All life on earth is supported by the soil. As the world population increases, more demands are placed on our soil resources. Maintaining soil health is a priority of all farmers. New technology, research, and education will provide tools farmers need to sustainably produce the food, fiber, and energy needs around the world. We encourage farmers to use soil health management systems and support NRCS soil health initiatives. We urge the AFBF to take the lead in developing a sufficient definition of sustainable agriculture that will lead us in the direction of a truly sustainable agriculture that makes wise use of all resources.

WATER

Water is one of Tennessee's most valuable natural resources. In the future, many decisions will be made to protect this resource.

We support the English doctrine of riparian water rights to surface and groundwater. We support the right of farmers to irrigate from streams and wells. Actions by state government to regulate water usage should recognize that crop irrigation and livestock watering is critical to maintain a stable food supply. We urge public water suppliers to offer discounted agricultural rates on water in production agriculture. Availability of water for human consumption, sanitation and production agriculture should supersede all other uses. Farmers should not be charged fees or required to receive permits for surface or groundwater withdrawals for purposes of maintaining a water budget in a basin or watershed. Any efforts to quantify water usage for agricultural purposes should be on a voluntary basis without mandatory reporting to state agencies. Farm Bureau should stay current on water issues and be involved in the decision making process.

Tennessee farmers have increased their use of irrigation on a wide range of commodities. Irrigation is a major benefit to the agricultural economy and is a critical component in our ability to produce food and fiber. We believe the Tennessee Farm Bureau should identify potential issues that may affect irrigation and find long term solutions to protect and enhance our ability to use irrigation.

The regulatory reach of "waters of the state" is greater than "waters of the United States." Truly navigable waters should be protected in order to ensure water quality. However, the definition of "waters" in Tennessee law needs to provide a regulatory exception for surface waters which are not "navigable waters" as defined in the federal Clean Water Act. This would provide consistency between state and federal law and assure that Tennessee will not lose its primacy or delegation under the Clean Water Act. It also would eliminate much of the guesswork and permitting that property owners currently must go through. Jurisdictional waters by the Federal government should be constrained to navigable waterways. Expansion of regulatory authority by the state or federal agencies without approval by the appropriate lawmakers should be strictly prohibited and swiftly enforced by the judicial branch.

We applaud Tennessee's farmers for the steps they have taken to improve the quality of our water resources. We encourage each farmer to do as much as can be reasonably done to reduce any negative impacts farming operations might have on our water resources. The percentage of the Recordation Tax dedicated to the Agricultural Resources Conservation Fund should be doubled without increasing the total tax.

We support the agriculture and forestry exemption in Tennessee's Water Quality Act. Voluntary use of Best Management Practices is the most cost-effective method of abating nonpoint source pollution from agricultural and forestry operations. Unlike most point source pollution, nonpoint source pollution events are highly dependent on uncontrollable and unpredictable weather events. This drastically increases the cost and decreases the effec-

tiveness of direct regulation of nonpoint sources as compared to point source regulations. We oppose placing Total Maximum Daily Load Allocations (TMDL) on nonpoint source discharges.

Plant nutrient run-off has historically been considered non-point source pollution. Regulatory agencies and environmental groups are now placing emphasis on nutrient loadings in water from nitrogen and phosphorus run-off. Every commodity produced in Tennessee would suffer financially under restrictions on the use and management of plant nutrients. Tennessee producers are vulnerable because very little scientific data exists regarding what levels cause stream impairment, agriculture's contribution to nutrient loadings, and what methods are available to reduce nutrient run-off. We oppose numeric nutrient standards in Tennessee's water quality criteria. We oppose agricultural nutrients being considered point sources of pollution. We believe the University of Tennessee, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, USDA NRCS and other stakeholders should work to establish recent and reliable data concerning nutrient run-off and realistic effects on water quality.

Public policies concerning the protection and management of water can and should be based on the best data obtainable. New technologies such as microbial source tracking are proving wildlife, human activity and domestic pets are the major contributors to water pollution in watersheds once thought impaired by agriculture. We support the funding of more studies such as the Beaver Creek Project conducted in Fayette, Haywood, Tipton and Shelby counties.

Farm Bureau encourages the Tennessee Division of Water Resources to undertake a timely and thorough water quality inventory on all navigable waters and reservoirs in the State. This study should be carried out by a nonbiased, scientifically qualified organization of highest reputation such as the USGS or National Academy of Sciences. Money provided by Section 319 of the Clean Water Act should be used on a highest priority basis for this purpose, if available.

Groundwater quality should be protected by regulation if, and only if, adequate monitoring shows the necessity of such regulation. We recommend utilities with pumping stations for raw sewage have a holding pond capable of holding 24 hours of output in case of a pump failure. This should be accomplished to keep raw sewage out of our drinking water.

State and federal agencies should respond to farmers and provide the same swift attention to contamination of groundwater used in agricultural production as to contamination of groundwater for human use.

Data from the U.S. Geological Survey and other sources show that the greatest threats to Tennessee's groundwater are faulty septic tank waste disposal systems and wellheads that are insufficiently protected against entry of pollutants into the aquifer. Stringent abandonment mandates of wellheads no longer in use should only be required if contamination or potential contamination of groundwater is proven. We support funding to the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture to find and demonstrate solutions to these problems.

We oppose suspension or reduction of allowable application rates for pesticides for the purpose of protecting groundwater unless nonbiased scientific studies indicate the particular pesticide in question can leach through the subsoil in significant quantities. Such actions could aggravate surface water pollution problems by making conservation tillage or no-till farming difficult or impossible. When such label changes are necessary, they should be made only for those regions where a problem exists or is imminently likely to occur.

WETLANDS

We oppose legislation prohibiting proper drainage and maintenance of agricultural land and defining productive agricultural

lands or woodlands as wetlands, or protected wetlands. Tennessee Farm Bureau should vigorously identify problems caused by broad wetlands definitions and by wetland regulating agencies (TWRA, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation - including the Board of Water Quality, Oil and Gas, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, E.P.A., and the Corps of Engineers).

A single agency, such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service, should make determinations and issue all permits for wetlands alterations affected by both federal and state rules. Economic impact statements should accompany environmental impact statements so a clear picture of benefits and costs is presented. We oppose any increase in permit fees and believe all fees should be refundable if the permit is not granted. Farm Bureau should pursue litigation when high fees or other limitations on private property rights become so great as to constitute a "taking" of private property by government.

(See also Farm Policy)

AIR

Agriculture's contribution to air quality is incalculable. Clean air and filtration of the atmosphere by vast acres of crops, pastures and forests on private land mitigate impurities placed into the air by the infrastructure that provides a higher standard of living for each citizen of this state. Farmers should be rewarded for their role in protecting and enhancing our air resources and not penalized through costly and restrictive regulations.

Federal implementation of the Clean Air Act should be based on sound science. We support increased agriculture air quality research to establish accurate and reliable data on agricultural emissions. Agricultural emissions reductions should be accomplished through voluntary, incentive based programs. EPA should seek the direction and guidance of USDA on issues and policies regarding agricultural air quality.

We recognize the debate over climate change and policies to address it are complex and controversial. The economic effects of reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) are relatively unknown; however, strong evidence suggests participating countries would sacrifice production and industrial growth. Climate change is a global issue, not just a domestic issue. We believe the U.S. should not take action to curb GHGs until all nations adopt the same standards. We oppose regulating GHGs under the Clean Air Act. Congress did not design or envision the Clean Air Act to address climate change. We oppose legislation to address climate change that could increase costs in agriculture and reduce agricultural production. We believe the task of feeding a growing world population supersedes the consequences of reducing GHGs from agriculture.

The benefits of any clean air regulations placed on farm operations should exceed the costs placed on the agriculture industry. State and federal agencies should perform a cost benefit analysis on any air quality mandates, not just for agriculture but all types of affected businesses.

We oppose mandatory air quality standards for ozone and particulate matter on farmers and agricultural businesses. We oppose emission control standards being placed on farming practices, farm equipment, cotton gins, grain handling facilities or other businesses directly involved at the farm level in the production and marketing of agricultural products. Farm machinery that predates these standards should be grandfathered.

We support exemptions in the state's open burning regulations that allow for burning of wood waste and crop residue grown on the property of the burn site. However, this exemption should be broadened to allow for open burning of minor amounts of paper and other non-hazardous materials on farms where no other practical disposal alternative exists.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

We recognize the intent of the Endangered Species Act, but we do not believe protection of these species should always receive priority.

Congress must assess whether the highest priority for the public's interest is the protection of certain endangered species or the continued efficient production of food, fiber or the protection of human life.

The Endangered Species Act does not confirm the accuracy of research reports when determining if a species is threatened, endangered or extinct (i.e., the spotted owl). If government accepts the responsibility of protecting endangered species, it must also show impacted citizens its facts are current and accurate. If populations of species become extinct, show no progress toward recovery within five years or grow to be no longer endangered, government restrictions of agricultural or other activities in the area should cease.

Landowners whose farming activities are affected because their land is considered habitat for an endangered species should be compensated for loss of livestock or any additional cost incurred by farmers as a direct result of the reintroduction of a species (i.e., birthing pens).

Public hearings with a minimum of a nine-month public notice should be held before any species is listed as endangered or threatened. We request a public hearing before any new species are introduced or reintroduced into an area.

Listing decisions should consider populations of the species in other countries. A species that is thriving in another country should not be listed in the United States.

WILDLIFE PESTS AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

Wildlife contributes to the natural beauty of Tennessee. Tennessee is richly blessed with abundant wildlife and wildlife habitat. TWRA has done an excellent job of providing wildlife and wildlife habitat for our state's citizens to enjoy. Farmers have made significant contributions to that success.

The natural and agricultural habitat in Tennessee biologically supports a large and wide variety of wildlife species. The wildlife numbers this state can carry biologically is much larger than the numbers socially accepted. Certain species have reached the limit of public acceptance in many areas of the state.

TFBF should oppose legislative approval of increased TWRA license fees unless the following conditions are met:

1. Doe harvest should be increased because of the excessive deer population. We oppose charging extra fees for doe permits.
2. TWRA must submit a plan, including measurable benchmarks, to the Legislature for mitigating wildlife damage to private property. Failure to meet benchmarks should result in a rollback of fees.

A reasonable balance between wildlife numbers and public acceptance can and should be achieved. The following items must be considered in pursuit of better harmony among wildlife enthusiasts, farmers/landowners and the general public:

- *Wildlife disease threats*

Wildlife can spread hazardous diseases to humans and animals. We need better methods to control populations and a better understanding of the problems they cause. State and local governments must control wildlife when it harms humans, livestock, crops, or waterways.

- *Wildlife impact on water quality*

TWRA and the public should be aware of the contamination caused to our streams and lakes by the increase in wildlife numbers. New technologies such as microbial source tracking are proving wildlife, not agri-

culture, is a major impairment to water quality. Studies in Maryland and Virginia demonstrated wildlife was responsible for over fifty-percent of bacterial contamination on the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers. Research in Texas in Lake Waco and Belton Lake showed forty percent and forty-nine percent respectively of E-coli contamination originated from wildlife. Better educational information should be developed so lawmakers and the public can understand the need for control.

- *Wildlife population controls*

Farm Bureau supports good wildlife management programs. In some areas of the state, however, managed species have become serious agricultural problems.

The rising deer population needs to be brought under control. The increased deer population has swelled out of reason and is no longer just impacting farm operations. In Tennessee, the initial deer restoration efforts began in 1936 with only a scattered population of 2,000 to 3,000 deer. We consider the current Tennessee deer population estimated somewhere between 900,000 and one million animals to be both socially and politically excessive. Deer are thriving in urban areas, feeding on ornamental shrubbery and gardens and resulting in many automobile accidents.

Increasing deer, coyote, wild dog, turkey, beaver, armadillo, geese, raccoons, wild hogs, sandhill cranes, and river otter populations are resulting in damages and are a costly problem for Tennessee farmers and need to be addressed. The American Black Vulture is a economic threat to many livestock producers and we support the removal of the black vulture from the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Wild hogs are not a native wildlife species to be protected and managed. Wild hogs are a nuisance species rapidly spreading across the state. Property damage, disease, and lost income from wild hogs are an imminent threat to Tennessee's production agriculture. We support TWRA's and the Wild Hog Eradication Team's (WHEAT) efforts toward controlling the spread of wild hogs. We believe this can best be accomplished by:

1. Stopping the spread of wild hogs and establishment of populations,
2. Eradicating small populations, and
3. The contraction and reductions of core populations.

- *Improve landowner options for problem wildlife*

TWRA and federal authorities should expand current acceptable procedures available to individual property owners to control or eliminate wildlife that is causing damage to crops or property and injury or death to livestock.

- *Introduction of New Species*

Wildlife species should not be introduced into an area by TWRA without public meetings. An economic impact statement should be required explaining the impact the species would have on the affected area. Approval by two-thirds of the actual farm producers in the area should be required before stocking wild game. In the past, bear, deer, geese and turkey have been reintroduced without landowner consent. We oppose the introduction of a non-native species into Tennessee.

We oppose the further expansion of elk into any part of Tennessee. However, since they have been released, we need to monitor TWRA to see strict permanent boundaries established and maintained. There should be no restrictions, fees, or license requirements for the harvest of elk found outside these boundaries.

- *Annual public report on wildlife damage needed*
We urge all landowners experiencing crop damage or other property damage due to wildlife, including auto insurance claims, to document the damage by photographs or other means and report the damage to TWRA and their county Farm Bureau. Estimates of the market value of crop damage and young growth timber as well as diseases and illnesses transmitted by wildlife to humans and/or animals should be documented and made available to the public. A public database of damage should be compiled by joining TWRA, TVA, TDA, Farm Bureau and any other databases to form credible statistics. These statistics should be used to coordinate solutions for the best use of land, wildlife, and waterways in Tennessee.
We urge the periodic reporting of total deer vehicle collision costs. Deer collisions cost Tennessee Farm Bureau families approximately \$30 million in 2018.
- *Compensation needed for damage to private property*
Wildlife damage is very costly to landowners. When TWRA introduced and/or managed species grow so numerous private property is damaged, farmers should be compensated.
TWRA should also be responsible for the monetary damages landowners incur because of big game. Most wild game inhabits private farmland. Wildlife management programs constantly interact with farming. Using a very conservative estimate to feed a deer at 25 cents per day, Tennessee landowners spend \$75.5 million per year just to feed the deer population.
- *Increased emphasis on improving hunter / landowner relationships*
Disrespectful hunters cause almost as much damage as wild game in some parts of the state. Farm Bureau needs to document problems caused by wildlife pests, by hunters, and by TWRA management and develop legislative remedies when necessary.
We encourage the promotion of hunter ethics and an improvement of hunter-landowner relations through increased hunter safety and educational programs. We recommend an intensified effort by wildlife officers and local law enforcement officials toward providing guidance and enforcing regulations on hunters to improve and correct hunter misbehavior problems.
- *Agricultural representation on the Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission (TFWC)*
Since farmers provide 75% of the food, habitat, and cover for wildlife, they should have more representation on the TFWC. Therefore, we recommend one full-time farmer/landowner should be added to the TFWC for each grand division of the State.
- *TWRA should operate under the same professional manner as other departments*
TWRA should be more responsive to Tennessee farmers. Professional and unbiased conduct and courtesy to landowners by TWRA officers improves the working relationships. As a commissioned law enforcement officer, TWRA officers should obtain permission, probable cause, or a search warrant before entering private property.
- *TWRA Land Procurement Policy*
We oppose the continued purchase of farmland. This land in turn is removed from county tax rolls and increases the need to raise property tax rates. We propose funds be used to create a state farmland trust, by the West Tennessee River Basin Authority, or other appropriate agencies, which may be used, if needed, for

repair of neglected TWRA land which is causing damage to adjacent private agricultural and forest lands. TWRA should maintain drainage on TWRA owned and or managed property in a manner that does not intentionally infringe on neighboring landowners.

- *Hunting Seasons*

We oppose hunting seasons set during times of heavy farm activity. Farmers are exposed to too much danger.

- *Miscellaneous*

Farmers and their families should be entitled to hunt on their own property as well as leased farm property without the same restrictions as the general public. It should not be mandatory for farmland owners or their family members, including grandchildren and children's spouses, to purchase a hunting license or have available TWRA authorized permission credentials while legally hunting on farmland under their ownership or under their control through a farm lease.

We continue to support the use of soft-jawed leg-hold traps.

SOIL CONSERVATION

World population growth places tremendous pressure on our soil and water resources. Soil resources are abused by accelerated soil erosion and stream sedimentation. Local Soil Conservation Districts' long range plans will slow soil erosion to acceptable soil loss levels. Lower soil erosion rates will enhance water quality.

Farmers will meet Tennessee water quality goals if state government commits to a comprehensive voluntary plan. The Tennessee Non-Point Management Strategy for agriculture and forestry establishes Best Management Practices on Tennessee farms and forests through research and education. If the Legislature and the Federal Government commit adequate funding, this plan will succeed.

Features of the plan are:

1. Voluntary soil erosion abatement programs using cost-sharing and tax incentives;
2. Properly funded educational and research programs for cost-benefit studies of conservation practices;
3. Special programs targeted at the most critical erosion areas.

Tennessee farmers are to be complimented for the results of the latest Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Statistics Review, which indicates State Average Soil Erosion Rates have been significantly reduced to near tolerance levels. Conservation tillage combined with a strong commitment to stewardship of the soil contributed to this fact. Since society expects farmers to protect clean water, farmers who continue to use these practices should receive incentives. This achievement was accomplished through voluntary programs rather than mandatory programs.

Soil conservation is a unique environmental problem that does not lend itself to strict regulatory requirements for solutions. The Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) report and even more recent studies by the NRCS further indicate that we can attain conservation tolerance levels through voluntary approaches. The State must make a stronger commitment to voluntary approaches when working with farmers.

We support research and implementation of soil health initiatives. New technologies and farming practices now allow farmers to manage soils in a way that strengthens soil biology. Healthy soils regulate water absorption, filter potential pollutants, cycle nutrients, and provide physical stability and support for plants. An emphasis on soil health can reduce erosion, increase yields, and reduce input costs. Cover crops can provide multiple benefits in crop management practices. We support increased research to

help farmers understand proper seed blends, methods of application, timing of cover crop termination, and agronomic balance.

Tennessee bottomlands, both hardwood and farmland, are damaged each year by floodwaters and standing waters on normally productive soils. Streams and rivers are clogged by fallen trees, debris, sandbars, and beaver dams. Often, state and federal agencies have imposed obstacles for landowners trying to correct problems. Landowners should be allowed to use reasonable measures to provide drainage.

The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture together with the NRCS should test and demonstrate alternate methods for stream bank stabilization and stream alteration and educate landowners on these practices. This should not be the responsibility of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

A comprehensive beaver control program for Tennessee must be developed to help eliminate flooding problems. Landowners should be encouraged to maintain drainage in a manner that does not infringe on neighboring landowners. Landowners with property delineated "Prior Converted Wetlands" and "Farmed Wetlands" are encouraged to maintain production agriculture on the property and not abandon acreage by allowing it to revert to wetland status where it may affect adjoining property. Property allowed to revert to wetland status could fall under regulatory control of federal and state agencies and could no longer be farmed. Private property rights must be protected. The perception is that wetlands are "public" resources, however, they are most often on private property.

Membership of the Tennessee Soil Conservation Committee should represent production agriculture. More representatives of non-agricultural organizations would increase the possibility of diverting future soil conservation funding from agricultural conservation needs to other projects.

Although modernization of the state soil conservation law may be needed, a thorough study of the positives and negatives by the agriculture community should occur before legislation is pursued.

When road construction occurs, proper disposal of the outfall of the drainage should complement the affected property and not increase the possibility of erosion or flooding.

DRAINAGE PROJECTS

The efforts of the West Tennessee River Basin Authority, Chickasaw Basin Authority, the West Tennessee Tributaries Project, and other similar drainage maintenance projects should be continued and fully funded. In the event projects require wetland mitigation, eminent domain should not be used to purchase property from unwilling sellers.

Public lands acquired for establishing wetlands should be used as mitigation banks for such projects. When development results in more floodwater moving to the lower portions of the watershed at an accelerated speed, more land is covered with floodwaters. Impounded water caused by drainage impediments creates flooding problems, which ultimately have negative impacts on the local economy.

We encourage the Corp of Engineers, West Tennessee River Basin Authority and other appropriate agencies to work together to maintain sufficient drainage within all watersheds to ensure the protection of prime agricultural crop and forestland. All parties should work together to find an acceptable balance that will allow these projects to proceed.

Watershed districts have a historical significance to this state. The farm community played a major role in their success. The Tennessee Watershed District Act of 1955, coinciding with the passage of federal legislation, allowed local watershed districts and USDA to share financial and planning assistance for watershed protection projects. TVA and the Army Corps of Engineers provided flood control along the major rivers while watershed districts provided

flood control within the smaller watersheds. For over fifty years, thousands of acres of farmland, homes, communities and towns have been protected from flooding because of these projects. However, many watershed dams are reaching the fifty-year design life. Decisions need to be made regarding the safety, function and future of watershed lakes in Tennessee. Farm Bureau should work with stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan and ensure the future of watershed lakes.

Municipal stormwater management and planning is a proactive way to prevent property damage and protect water quality in urbanized areas where commercial, residential and industrial development have increased impervious surfaces and collected stormwater flow. Local governments should not have the authority to require stormwater management on farmland. Farmland is not the reason for municipal stormwater management; urbanization and development of farmland is. Stream buffers and other management practices on farmland are the responsibility of USDA, NRCS and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. Stormwater management fees should be established with caution and limited to those properties that have impervious surfaces resulting in increased runoff. We applaud the Tennessee General Assembly for clarifying farmland is not subject to the stormwater management fees.

RIVER DESIGNATIONS

We are proud of Tennessee's river systems. Tennesseans have benefited from the economic and natural resources they provide. Local, voluntary involvement from farmers and non-farmers has and will protect the quality of our rivers and their watersheds.

No additional rivers and/or adjoining land should be added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. We urge reevaluation of all existing wild and scenic rivers. We oppose proposals preventing the private economic development of lands next to a stretch of river.

Eminent domain should not be used to take scenic easements or title to privately owned land along a stretch of river.

The establishment of community stakeholder groups to provide local solutions to local issues of concern has merit. When balanced properly, groups can surface cost-effective, practical ways to implement conservation practices and protect water quality and endangered species. In order for such stakeholder groups to work successfully, local people must develop the by-laws and maintain the decision-making authority. Protection of private property rights should always remain a core element of all stakeholder groups. The role of state and federal agency personnel should never exceed the role of local property owners in these organizations.

TWRA FISHING LAKES

Farm Bureau objects to the condemnation of productive agricultural land for the construction of TWRA fishing lakes. Condemnation of agricultural land for less essential projects is an unjustified encroachment by a state agency on private property rights.

We do not support funding TWRA fishing lakes from the general revenue account. Sporting activities and other nonessential luxury activities should be funded by those who participate and benefit. The use of funds generated from the sale of sporting goods is an appropriate source of funds to support sporting activities. The proceeds from licenses and user fees are also appropriate sources. Clearly, the burden of sports fishing enthusiasts should not be borne by the public.

REELFOOT LAKE

Reelfoot Lake is a unique landmark in Tennessee because of its natural resource values and historical formation by an earthquake in the winter of 1811 and 1812. Property surrounding the 25,000 acre lake is some of the most productive farmland in Tennessee. Reelfoot Lake benefits Tennessee in economic, cultural and environmental ways.

Changes in lake levels can have an effect on farmers, businesses and residences long established around the lake area. We believe protection of the lake should be developed by considering all segments of the community around Reelfoot Lake. We oppose proposals by federal and state agencies to manipulate the lake if adverse impacts are created on agriculture, businesses and residents in the lake area. Mitigation lands or any lands required to permit maintenance and restoration projects should be purchased through willing seller agreements and not by the power of eminent domain. If water levels are artificially maintained in a way that encroaches private property, then that property should be purchased or easements acquired based on willing seller agreements and not by the power of eminent domain. We oppose any efforts that would change the natural beauty progression of the lake.

The Running Reelfoot Bayou should be restored using environmentally sound methods to provide flood control below and above the lake.

PUBLIC LANDS

In the United States of America, government owns more property than any other capitalistic nation. A policy should be established requiring the government to release an equal dollar value of productive farm property for public sale whenever new lands are purchased by government. Fees for commercial use of federal lands, (grazing, logging, commercial recreation facilities, etc.) should be set at levels that maximize long-term net income to the federal government consistent with conservation of the land resource and mindful of the original purpose and intent of the national forest enabling legislation.

We oppose major increases in federal grazing fees. Such action drives ranchers from federal lands resulting in reduced stewardship of that land and reduced income to the government.

Strict consideration should be given to the financial impact on the people when the government buys the land depriving the county of taxes, jobs and other revenue. We oppose the expansion of the Hatchie, Lower Hatchie and Chickasaw management areas. Removing productive farmland negatively influences local economies and shifts the tax burden to private landowners.

All these factors should be considered before other land is taken out of production.

Government owned facilities designed for recreational use by all terrain and other sport vehicles should be built on existing government property. Funds used to finance such facilities should not be derived from all-terrain vehicles used for farm purposes.

Fire suppression policies should be consistent with good forest management. The policy of some public land management areas to allow fires started by nature to continue to burn fails to meet these criteria and should be changed. When erosion, forest insects, fire, disease or noxious weed infestations occur on public lands, the managing agency should be required to apply proper and timely forest management and protection practices to control these problems and prevent their spread to private lands.

The federal government owns and the U.S. Forest Service manages thousands of acres of forest lands in Tennessee. TFBF and the U.S. Forest Service should strive to develop a working relationship to identify common concerns and goals. We oppose any portion of a national forest having multiple use in Tennessee being placed under the federal Wilderness Act.

ABANDONED MINE LAND RECLAMATION

The federal government collected funds from coal mined under Public Law 95-87 to reclaim abandoned mine lands.

Since Tennessee gave up primacy and the only source of funds left for Tennessee comes through the Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP) which has only received about one-fourth of its authorized amount, Tennessee Farm Bureau urges the Tennessee congressional delegation to pursue action to place these funds as an off budget item. This will assure funding for RAMP to begin so the work may proceed.

The state and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service should be used to survey abandoned mine lands to locate and identify catch basins, acid water pools and other seepages. Reclamation efforts should then be directed toward filling and correcting these specific sites and not toward disturbing large acreage where nature or private ownership has already begun a reforestation process.

LITTER AND WASTE

Waste becomes a greater problem every year. We support efforts to control litter and waste. We favor well managed waste collection points, frequent dumpster pick-ups, and easier access to landfills. We want recyclable beverage containers and deposits and refunds on bottles and cans. We encourage the State Legislature to look at the passage of a bottle bill as other states have done, as a way of helping to keep our roadways clean.

We advocate a reasonable tax on manufacturers of glass containers to create an added financial incentive for recycling glass.

Dumping trash and litter along the roadside and on adjoining private property is, deservedly, a crime in most Tennessee jurisdictions. Litter along roadsides and farms is not only unsightly, but the bottles, cans and plastic bags are damaging to livestock and farm machinery and also hazardous to the operator. We promote the use of biodegradable containers. Farm Bureau members must encourage the public to be more concerned about litter problems along roadways. We favor strict enforcement of litter laws.

Educational materials aimed at teaching school children of the negative impacts of litter and trash are needed in today's curricula. Over the long-run, source reduction and preventive measures through education will be more cost effective in eliminating our litter problems. We encourage an effort to develop such a unit for the Agriculture in the Classroom materials.

Private industry is developing a variety of recycling centers across the state. All Tennesseans should recycle whatever they can. We recommend education about recycling and endorse promotional programs for recycling.

We support studies to find better methods for handling solid waste. Biodegradable containers, including cornstarch based plastics, sorting and recycling centers, incineration, composting, and source reduction all may help reduce the need for future landfills.

We support increased research for proper disposal of plastics and rubber products used for agricultural purposes.

Rural landowners need to be concerned that nearby urban areas are finding farmland an excellent site for urban garbage. Rural people should insist urban areas dispose of their own garbage. Governments that operate rural landfills or use landfills in rural areas must be required to meet the same environmental quality restrictions imposed on private businesses. Landfill owners must be required to preserve property values of land next to landfills. Adequate buffer zones, earthen berms, tree plantings, and proper maintenance of the site to alleviate nuisance odors, trash, and scavenging birds and animals must be required.

Farmers should be allowed to take dead animals to landfills.

Used tires have a growing market for potential uses. This will greatly reduce the number of old tires being shredded and sent to

landfills annually. We commend those companies in Tennessee currently using waste tires for end use products such as tire-derived fuel and encourage others to also use used tires.

Working with UT Extension, the State should develop a reasonable method to allow used tires to continue to be used as covers for bunker silos and other similar farm uses.

A temporary storage facility for nuclear waste materials should not be permitted in Tennessee. This could result in Tennessee becoming a hub for the nation's nuclear waste transportation system and multiplying the possibility of a nuclear accident. Tennesseans do not need their health endangered by nuclear waste sites.

NOXIOUS WEEDS

We continue our support of efforts to combat and control noxious, and herbicide resistant weeds. We call on all property owners and operators, railroads and especially local, state, and federal highway departments to spray road right-of-ways in a responsible manner. The spread of weed pests to farmlands can be prevented and controlled with timely and appropriate steps such as:

- a. Spray road right-of-ways,
- b. Mow earlier to control the spread of thistles, Johnson grass and other noxious weeds before blooming.

Herbicide resistant weeds are a major problem for farmers. We encourage all landowners, both public and private, to work together to contain the spread of resistant weeds. We support research to reduce the potential of spreading noxious and herbicide resistant weeds through land applications of manure.

We support strong, enabling legislation allowing and encouraging counties to make greater noxious weed control efforts.

We urge the expansion of research efforts to develop the best possible means of control and prevention of the further spreading of all troublesome noxious weeds in our state. We urge county Farm Bureaus and all agricultural agencies and organizations to work together to help farmers and the various highway departments and utilities in understanding and carrying out effective control and eradication programs for noxious weeds. We oppose removing Johnson grass from the noxious weed list.

We encourage UT to coordinate research with other southern research institutions to control noxious weeds.

FIRE ANT

We recognize the detrimental effects both economic and social of fire ants. We encourage the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, the University of Tennessee and other state universities, to pursue every opportunity to encourage and use research to minimize the expansion and address the eradication of fire ants.

With over half of our ninety-five counties affected by the fire ant quarantine, we need to be diligent to follow USDA guidelines for the safe handling and treatment of baled hay, straw and nursery products to slow the spread and infestation of fire ants.

VI - HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE HEALTH AND MEDICAL

We believe health care is primarily the responsibility of the individual. Individuals, and individual groups, should be able to purchase health care coverage designed to meet their unique needs. Mandated health insurance benefits are unnecessary, drive up cost, and cater to special interest.

We oppose a compulsory national health insurance system in any form and any requirement that all individuals or employers to purchase health insurance. We oppose government-funded and/or government-administered health care for all citizens.

We oppose mandatory "guaranteed issue" and/or "commu-

nity rating" standards, which restricts the ability to appropriately underwrite risks. Experience shows these practices substantially increases the premiums of health insurance policies.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) passed in 2010 should be reviewed, with substantial revisions made or the act repealed in its entirety.

We support government program funding of health care education and training, including student health education programs such as the Coordinated School Health Program. We endorse disease prevention, immunization and health improvement programs, and medical research embracing all phases of human health.

Tennessee's childhood obesity and diabetes rates are alarmingly high, causing health concerns and increased health care costs. We encourage Farm Bureau to continue to educate Tennesseans, particularly youth, on the health benefits of maintaining a healthy weight. We oppose the mandated vaccinations for the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), although we encourage strong public education on vaccinations.

Over the past 50 years, fluoridation of community drinking water has been a major factor responsible for the decline in tooth decay. Water fluoridation remains the most equitable and cost effective method of delivering fluoride to all members of most communities, regardless of age, educational experience, or income level.

Prescription drugs are an expensive component of health insurance. Among all the states, Tennessee has one of the highest per capita prescription drug use rates and has experienced the greatest increase in the use of painkiller prescription drugs.

The numbers are alarming. This apparent overuse of prescription drugs makes it difficult for Farm Bureau members to find affordable drug benefits. We support efforts and encourage physicians to take a more active role in combating the abuse of prescription drugs especially those of an addictive nature.

We encourage Farm Bureau members to take advantage of savings in generic drugs. We commend TRH (Farm Bureau Health Plans) for its home delivery pharmacy program and encourage its utilization by members, many of whom can receive significant savings when they purchase certain prescription drugs via mail, phone or Internet orders.

Alternative methods of medical delivery, such as telemedicine, allows cost effective access to medical care for our rural residents. Coupled with Tennessee's investments in roads and highways, rural residents enjoy greater access to healthcare than ever before. None the less, rural communities still need relatively close access to hospitals, especially emergency and critical care units. We support innovative and market-based methods to maintain a hospital presence in rural communities. We support the Tennessee Rural Hospital Transformation Act of 2018.

We encourage Congress and the state legislature to study the rising costs of prescription drugs, particularly the elevated use of prescription drugs by Tennesseans. Health providers must find ways to hold down medical care costs. We encourage physicians to follow evidence of best practice. All citizens who use medical services should be prudent in their demands and cooperate with providers to contain costs. As health care consumers, patients should ask questions about services they receive and treatment alternatives. Health care consumers should be proactive in managing their health needs, such as taking flu vaccinations, recommended mammograms, cervical cancer screening, and PSA tests. To maintain quality health care in rural communities, we support reasonable economic incentives by state and local government to encourage physicians, nurses and other trained medical personnel to practice in rural areas.

We are concerned about physicians' ownership of health care facilities for which they refer their own patients. Such arrangements will lead to increased use and thus increased health care cost.

We support the exemption for employers of farm laborers from the requirement of providing workers' compensation coverage; however, farmers who choose to provide such coverage should have the protections provided by the workers' compensation statutes.

TENNCARE

We support efforts to better control the state's share of health care expenditures to TennCare. We also support aggressive efforts by The Office of Inspector General to investigate and prosecute all areas of TennCare fraud, such as out of state residents enrolling in the program.

MEDICAL CARE OF THE INDIGENT AND UNINSURED

We applaud the state's approach through Cover Tennessee to offer coverage for uninsured workers with shared funding by participating employers and workers and the state.

Medical care for the indigent costs everyone. Health providers routinely increase the bills of paying patients and their insurance companies to pass on indigent and charity care costs. Physicians, hospitals, insurance companies, employees, employers, government, and every insured private citizen must lend a hand to the solution.

Public health care policy should promote prepayment of future health care needs by every individual to the greatest extent possible. Public law must assure individuals who have the ability to pay for health care needs are not subsidized by other taxpayers.

Indigent care cost paid by government should be financed through broad-based tax revenues. This will prevent an unequal and unfair share of the financial burden being placed on citizens regularly covered through health insurance.

EDUCATION

Educational opportunities for Tennessee's young people should be improved. Farm Bureau members must provide active leadership throughout the educational system. Parents and Farm Bureau leaders should acquaint themselves with textbooks to insure the inclusion of the scientifically based agriculture information.

While we continue to support basic skills, we encourage higher levels of reading, writing and math skills (i.e., critical thinking skills, calculus, and metric math) and more emphasis on scientific studies and a strong IT program to meet agriculture industry needs. Required courses in economics should help students understand the American system of self-government and the benefits of the private, competitive enterprise system. We support agricultural lessons and activities in all K-12 classes. We strongly recommend agriculture be included in STEM education: "STEAM". The 4-H club program should be an integral part of the education system. We encourage school officials to include foreign language in elementary school curriculum, school counselors in elementary levels and develop career paths (including vocational and technical paths) in the middle school. We encourage the TN Department of Education CTE agricultural education programs be included in virtual programs that are now replacing traditional programs.

Programs should provide greater educational opportunities and incentives for exceptional students. The needs of all students in a classroom should be considered when determining whether a "special needs" student will be included in the regular program such as physical education and some vocational areas where positive learning experiences can be provided. We support a reform of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Illegal drugs, firearms and weapons of any form cannot be tolerated in schools. However, everyday objects can also be used

as weapons. Therefore, we urge school administrators to consider the intent of the possession of the device when enforcing the zero tolerance law. Continually disruptive, violent and abusive children should be sent to alternative schools and not left in the “regular” classrooms. Discipline and structure must first be exemplified in the home. Money is not the answer to all of our problems. We support the appropriate use of discipline in our public schools. We encourage all school districts to work with local government and military offices to consider implementation of ROTC classes as part of curriculum.

We support the concept of on-line education for both children and adults.

The internet is an excellent educational tool, if used properly. Some material accessed through the internet is unsuitable for students. We support internet blocks installed by local school systems.

In most cases, neighborhood schools are best. Parents are more likely to participate in school affairs if the school is close to the community. Busing schemes weaken the ties a school has with the parents of its children. Consolidated schools are not always the best schools if they are so far from homes that parents cannot participate in school activities and children feel like strangers.

Financing elementary and secondary schools is primarily the responsibility of state and local governments. Local control works better. The State Board of Education should not be allowed to cut off funds to counties who refuse to provide facilities local people do not believe are needed. State funds should not be cut off to a county for any reason if more than 25% of the county real estate tax revenue is allocated to service debt for educational facilities.

Municipalities that do not operate a school system should not receive the share of state sales tax revenue allocated to education. All local sales tax revenues enacted for education must go to the unit of government operating the school system.

Local involvement in education builds and maintains a strong school system. A quality director of schools is a key component for direction of a system. An educational degree and experience are important qualifications for a director of schools. Appointing a director of schools is not widely accepted by all counties. Therefore, local governments should have the authority to decide if an appointed or elected superintendent or director of schools is best for a community.

We ask both elected and appointed officials to conduct a thorough examination of all regulations and guidelines, both state and federal, and make every effort to change or abolish those that are without merit, designed only to carry out consolidation, costing many tax dollars with little or no value to the education process. We ask that communities endeavor to establish and support regulations and guidelines with educational value. The educational process should not become a pawn in the political process of costing taxpayer dollars to satisfy a political agenda. Involvement of classroom teachers in policy development should be encouraged.

Tennessee schools have a population of students brought into this country as children when their parents or guardians entered the United States without documentation. While federal immigration policy to address undocumented immigration remains in flux, we believe children of undocumented immigrants should receive an education. We believe the concept of a good education will solve many of the social issues that accompany undocumented immigration activity. These students are eligible to enroll in state institutions of higher education. However, they are not eligible for in-state tuition because of their undocumented status. We believe undocumented students educated in Tennessee's K-12 system should be eligible for in-state tuition.

We support the original intent of Tennessee's Teacher Tenure System to protect teachers against political abuse. The law can and should be effectively reformed to meet today's needs without damaging its original intent and purpose. We encourage school administrators to do everything within their power to reward com-

petent, effective teachers and to deal appropriately with incompetent and ineffective teachers. Teacher evaluations should be fair and reasonable with the goals of improving teaching and student learning. A teacher's effectiveness should not be based upon the performance of students the teacher has never taught.

We oppose the teaching of alternative lifestyles in the public school system and/or the acknowledgement of any celebration regarding alternative lifestyles. We oppose educators advocating homosexuality and/or a Bill of Gay Rights. We oppose granting special privileges to those who participate in alternative lifestyles.

Teaching about the history of religions and teaching religious doctrine are two different concepts. In our public school systems, religious doctrine should not be taught. We oppose the substitutions of other symbols (i.e., C.E. and B.C.E.) in place of Christian reference symbols.

We accept and defend the right of parents to send children to private, parochial schools or to home school their children. However, we oppose using public funds to support private schools at the detriment of public schools.

AGRICULTURAL AND FAMILY CONSUMER SCIENCE EDUCATION

High school agricultural education and family and consumer science courses are vital programs for the development of the talent and leadership needed in farming and other agricultural industries. We support the Division of College, Career and Technical Education) and all activities of Tennessee FFA and FCCLA (Family Career and Community Leaders of America) chapters.

We support continued funding of a state-funded endowment to support the youth development and leadership goals of the Tennessee FFA Foundation Inc. and the Tennessee 4-H Foundation Inc. A successful agricultural education program consists of an equal mix of classroom/laboratory instruction, Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE) and FFA. Each student and teacher should be provided the maximum opportunity to excel. Regional staff are needed to optimize coordination among the various FFA program levels, provide teacher training and development, and ensure program integrity.

Enrollment in Tennessee high school agricultural and family and consumer science courses has declined in part because of changes in state graduation requirements, as well as college entrance requirements. In our quest for science, math and language we should not overlook the skills, understanding, and knowledge of life that can be gained in quality agricultural and home family and consumer science courses.

As our farming population continues to decline, there is an increasing need to teach students about agriculture. We support the current concept of allowing agricultural classes to receive a science equivalent credit when the curriculum and instruction are sufficient. We encourage counties to include on-line and advance placement classes in their curriculum. This allows college bound students more flexibility to take more agricultural classes. We recommend the State Board of Regents and the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees reconsider college entrance requirements that steer students away from vocational courses.

We encourage agricultural education students to enroll in traditional college preparatory classes besides vocational agricultural classes.

Agricultural education programs must be constantly renewed. They must meet the changing needs of our society and commercial agriculture. They must prepare students for their greatest possible contribution to society.

Agricultural education should be a year-round effort. Many activities for students occur during traditional summer school vacations. Agriculture teachers visit and evaluate progress of students' SAE programs that provide transitions from school to work. An ef-

fective agricultural program is a twelve-month program. Therefore, agricultural teachers participating in summer programs should be employed on twelve-month contracts. School systems that do not have twelve-month agricultural programs yet receive state funding for twelve-month agricultural programs should not be allowed to reallocate leftover funds for another purpose.

We strongly urge the legislature and administration to support the complete funding for Camp Clements FFA leadership camp. This activity is an important part of the total FFA program.

The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture and the other state and community colleges need to develop night courses leading to agricultural degrees. Many farmers and others involved in agribusiness wish to pursue a college degree part-time. Others need to update their skills. We recommend the State Board of Regents and the state community colleges continue to provide full-time agricultural courses that fulfill requirements for The University Parallel Program. The agricultural classes provide an important academic and social transition between high school and a four-year college. We support adult vocational training to teach new job-related skills.

We urge the University of Tennessee and Board of Regents to maintain agricultural programs that currently exist. Farming and agricultural professions exist in every county of the state. Therefore, agriculture should be offered as a degree program in all higher education institutions that service each Tennessee region.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

The Institute of Agriculture of the University of Tennessee has played an important role in the development of agriculture and the rural economy of this state. As the Board of Trustees considers efforts to streamline the University of Tennessee System, it is imperative the Institute of Agriculture maintains the prominent position in the overall university structure it enjoys today.

The Board of Trustees should understand the Institute of Agriculture has a much broader mission than other colleges within the university. The College of Veterinary Medicine, UT Extension, the Herbert College of Agriculture, the Agricultural Research and Education Centers and the Center for Profitable Agriculture constitute an organization that is a vital extension of the university to the communities and people throughout the state. In that role, the representatives of these entities can facilitate the overall mission of the university. We urge the Board to do nothing that would weaken the effectiveness of these entities, but rather to enhance their ability.

We commend the University of Tennessee for its efforts in moving agricultural research to a new, unprecedented level. From agricultural mechanization to plant and animal genomics, bioengineering, and biofuels research, the University of Tennessee has poised itself and the state to move to the forefront in agriculture. We encourage the university to continue these efforts at all of its Tennessee Research and Education Centers and educational campuses.

It is our resolution that the university continues to strengthen and evolve its outreach programs. We appreciate the University for expanding its web-based information to meet the needs of progressive and aggressive food and fiber producers located throughout our state. However, this is by no means a proclamation to abandon the core and strength of UT Extension, that being its people. From the smallest home gardener to the largest animal operation, it is imperative the university continues to support and strengthen its adult and youth extension programs. Without this "personal touch", foundation support of agriculture in this state could be severely eroded.

The College of Veterinary Medicine is an asset to this state. The college provides quality veterinarians and works closely with all aspects of animal agriculture including the Tennessee Depart-

ment of Agriculture diagnostic labs and animal health industries. We support the addition of swine animals used for food production to the State Contract Necropsy Service. The College of Veterinary Medicine possesses "full accreditation" and is in full compliance with all accreditation standards as reviewed and assessed by the AVMA Council on Education. We support the faculty and staff of UTCVM.

Most importantly, we stress the University of Tennessee continue to strengthen and improve its educational programs for its students. Both UT-Knoxville and UT-Martin will play key roles in the education and development of agricultural leaders for our state and quite possibly the country. Furthermore, we decree these students be trained not only in the latest, cutting edge technologies, but also have a superior knowledge of the most basic principles of agriculture and its commodities. To accomplish these goals, we insist the university maintain the necessary personnel, teaching, research, and extension, as well as resources, to meet the needs of the clientele for this state.

UT Martin, UT Chattanooga and the UT Health Science Center have a strong mission as outstanding institutions. Those students, faculty and alumni must believe they are a vital and important contributor to the total University System.

Finally, it is our utmost desire the University of Tennessee and Tennessee Farm Bureau maintain a formidable association. Through this relationship, we can move the state and its people into an even brighter future.

UT EXTENSION

The University of Tennessee Extension and the Tennessee Research and Education Centers have made outstanding contributions to the welfare of all Tennesseans. These programs must be strengthened to meet the future needs of agriculture. We stress the need for applied research. We recognize the need for individual attention for agricultural producers due to diversity of production practices and resources. We applaud the UT Extension for efforts such as Master Producer Programs, which we encourage the University of Tennessee to develop as an "on-line" program. Master Producer programs are designed to upgrade specialized technical assistance in specific areas of production agriculture. This assistance has provided the latest best management practices necessary to keep Tennessee farmers on the cutting edge. No doubt, farmers benefit but consumers enjoy the greatest benefit. They receive plentiful supplies of safe and nutritious food and fiber.

UT Extension has been so effective because leaders in each county develop their educational programs by listening to the problems faced by farmers and rural communities. Tennessee receives important economic benefits from funds it invests in agricultural research, extension, and the College of Veterinary Medicine. New programs provide services to non-farm people, but they should not be developed at the expense of programs for farm families.

The UT Institute of Agriculture should continue to provide independent forage, soil, pest and plant analysis.

Farm Bureau supports the 4-H Club program and encourages the continued emphasis on production agriculture in program activities.

4-H camps have been a key component of the development programs for Tennessee youth. We applaud the efforts of elected officials, volunteers and all others involved in securing the Lone Oaks 4-H and Rural Conference Center. This facility should be used in training and teaching 4-H youth as well as adults.

The state benefits greatly from the training in leadership UT Extension gives to 4-H youth and adults. We support funding of the AgrAbility Project and its mission to assist people with disabilities involved in agriculture. Farm Bureau urges UT Extension to enhance efforts to implement the Tennessee Agricultural Leadership Development Program. Farm Bureau should play a key role in

sponsorship of this program. We have many resources that benefit the participants and our organization stands to gain leaders with intense training in leadership skills. Judging programs teach practical skills used in all aspects of life. Judging, training and competition should remain a primary focus of all 4-H programs.

The Tennessee Junior Livestock Exposition has developed into one of the nation's top livestock programs for 4-H and FFA members. The livestock industry benefits from the demonstration of quality livestock. Tennessee's young people benefit from the responsibility developed from a live animal project. The Legislature should adequately fund this program because of the education it provides to Tennessee's youth and agriculture.

We applaud UT Extension for allowing applicants to be hired in their home county. Every effort should be made to avoid conflicts-of-interest while filling these positions.

We oppose the removal of the U.T. Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications Department from the Herbert College of Agriculture and its placement into another college in the university system for these reasons:

1. Educational workshops are vital to continuing teacher education
2. In-service programs of the department are vital to all county extension offices.
3. The departmental relationship with the Tennessee FFA Association does not need to be broken.
4. We support the continuing education of the state's extension agents.

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Strong, well-funded agricultural research programs are essential to the future viability of agricultural production in Tennessee and the United States. We urge the Tennessee State Legislature and the U.S. Congress to ensure adequate funding for agricultural research not as a favor to farmers but as a wise investment for a strong economy in our future. We encourage regional (including out of state) cooperation among experiment stations and research institutions.

Publicly funded agricultural research performs many essential functions, among them testing of technologies, varieties, and products developed privately and marketed to agricultural producers. We urge the University of Tennessee in particular and land grant universities in general to test new varieties and other products as thoroughly and as quickly as funding will allow and to transmit results to producers as quickly as reasonably possible. We encourage the University to keep all research positions filled at their Research and Education Centers.

We urge the University of Tennessee and other land grant universities to continue the development of varieties and make them available to producers as unprotected varieties or at minimal royalties. The availability of adapted public varieties will serve several purposes:

1. Sellers of genetically enhanced varieties will be forced by competition to keep technology fees down to levels that reflect the actual increased value the technology adds for the producer. This is particularly important given the monopolistic trends in the seed production business.
2. Adapted, non-patented varieties will continue to fill niches in the seed markets such as geographical areas that are not well-served by the large seed companies, situations where high planting rates are called for, use for cover crops and so on. The actual demand for such varieties may be much larger than these niches.
3. In years when the commercial seed supply is scarce or of low quality, the presence of scattered bins full of adapted, non-patented seed could prove important. In the

past soybean and small grain producers have never been completely dependent on commercial seed supplies. It would be wise not to become completely dependent.

4. While we support the marketing of genetically enhanced commodities through normal marketing channels without labeling or segregation from other varieties, some customers may be willing to pay more for non-genetically enhanced commodities. If so, producers need to have varieties available to supply that niche market.

Public research institutions must remember their purpose is to serve the public interest. Privately funded grants should be accepted only in cases where the public service function of the institution will not be compromised. Patents or copyrights developed through research at public institutions should remain the property of the institution and be managed as public assets. Grants of exclusive rights to such patents should be made with great care and with the public interest in mind.

We encourage the universities to continue support and funding for applied research. We are encouraged by the development of the Beef and Forage Centers and Reproductive Management Center within the University of Tennessee Research Centers and the resulting support to Tennessee's beef industry.

We congratulate the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture for its success in keeping public service, not the pursuit of private grants, as its primary criteria in planning and executing research. We urge the Institute to continue to keep public service as the top priority even as funding sources, technologies, and the structure of the agriculture industry change.

SOCIAL SECURITY

We request action to preserve the integrity of Social Security for retirees and workers paying into the system. Long-term reform should include giving all Americans a choice of retirement systems, government or private plans which operate under the same deposit percentages and withdrawal age rules. We support personal retirement accounts that are owned by the individual and are transferable at death. Such changes should not affect the benefits for current or future recipients.

Social Security tax increases for individuals earning below the maximum wage base for Social Security tax have stabilized in the last few years. The increases in the Social Security tax rates along with wage base increases have resulted in an extreme burden. Efforts to return Social Security to actuarial soundness should focus on stabilized benefits rather than tax increases.

Social Security benefits should not be financed out of general revenues.

Existing pension plans for government employees should include Social Security contributions and benefits. Those who have paid little, or no tax should receive no increased benefits. Low income taxpayers must have paid taxes regularly to be eligible for benefits. Convicted criminals serving sentences in correctional institutions and those individuals committed to mental institutions because of crime should not receive benefits.

The Social Security Programs should be more considerate and consistent in the formula to determine material participation of retiring farmers or other self-employed individuals. The retiring farmer has invested in land and capital assets and should be treated like other investors and be able to continue to manage his investment.

A more flexible interpretation of "material participation" should be initiated so retired farmers may reside on their farms and have their crops produced and sold under a crop share lease without jeopardizing their Social Security benefits.

Supplemental benefits not earned through the payment of Social Security taxes should be charged to the welfare program instead of the Social Security Fund.

Supplement Security Income (SSI) payments to individuals outside the United States should be closely scrutinized as to the validity of the claims on the programs. The public should be assured the intent of the program is not being circumvented nor is fraud occurring.

WELFARE

Welfare should not be a way of life.

We support Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), known as "Families First" in Tennessee. Families First provides transition benefits for low income families, with an emphasis on moving participants toward independence through work, training, and education. Families First is a goal-oriented, time-limited assistance program for families with dependent children. Many ideas long supported by Farm Bureau are included in Families First.

Families should have the opportunity to work themselves away from dependence on government assistance. With Families First, as participants go to work they will continue to receive transitional benefits, including child care assistance, TennCare coverage and housing assistance. However, cash benefits will be time-limited and tied to goals achieved.

We must help those living in poverty find the educational help and job training they need to work. Families First allows families to complete their high school education or GED and advance their skills, with support services, provided they are working. Farm Bureau strongly encourages the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) to strictly enforce its compliance and sanction statutes regarding school attendance of all Families First customers.

Adolescent parents should be required to finish school. One of many personal responsibilities required in Families First is for teen parents to stay in school and live at home.

Higher education is not a necessity to acquire basic job skills. College students should not be allowed to participate in welfare programs.

Regulations in past programs have resulted in the father being absent in order for the family to receive financial aid. Policies should recognize intact families are more likely to succeed. Adult recipients are allowed to marry while participating in Families First. However, cash payments do not increase as family size increases during a period of eligibility.

Assistance to the deserving should be prompt and efficient. No strikers, prison inmates or illegal immigrants should be allowed to participate. We support drug testing to determine eligibility and/or retention of benefits.

All forms of fraud should be prosecuted, and future benefits denied.

Programs form a significant portion of state and federal budgets. Such programs should not be exempt from budget cuts; reduced budgets should provide the discipline to eliminate waste and fraud. All programs should be incorporated into a single agency for more efficient control.

VII – OTHER CATASTROPHIC EVENTS PROTECTION

Catastrophic events, such as earthquakes, hurricanes and pandemics, can kill thousands of people, cause billions of dollars in property damage, and weaken our nation's financial system.

A catastrophic event in a populated, developed area can severely damage our nation's economy by interrupting trade relationships in our stock and security markets.

The insurance industry could encounter a severe financial hardship. This would result in the substantial liquidation of assets and thus the destabilization of the municipal stock and bond market.

We support workable legislation that will responsibly consider

the financial impact on the insurance industry in case of a catastrophic event.

NATIONAL DEFENSE

We support the U. S. government in its war against terrorism and increased vigilance to protect our nation's food supply. We recognize the importance of adopting bio-security measures.

Food can no longer be separated from our national security. We encourage the U.S. government to strengthen existing capabilities to respond to a bioterrorist attack and support emergency spending for food and agricultural security. Protecting our nation's food supply should be a number one priority.

Our military strength should emphasize a commitment to peace rather than pose a threat to other nations. The United States of America must maintain a superior defense system to protect our nation and maintain our leadership in the free world. We support development and funding of an effective national missile defense system capable of defending the United States against an accidental, unauthorized, or deliberate ballistic missile attack. The United States military should not be used as a United Nations police force or in areas where we have no vital interest.

Veterans of all foreign wars or conflicts and subsequent actions required of those identified wars or conflicts should be provided medical care and compensation for health complications experienced because of such active duty.

The United States should maintain a superior intelligence network to protect our nation's security interest. We commend the creation of the "Office of Homeland Security" and believe we should all work together as Americans defending the freedoms of this nation. We support stringent controls on the export of new or improved high technology items and expertise to unstable countries and military dictatorships.

The selective service registration system should be maintained so the draft could be immediately reinstated if needed.

We oppose waste and mismanagement in military affairs as much as in any other area of government.

LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

Collective bargaining by voluntary associations is a part of our private competitive economic system. Because farmers are owners and managers, we understand the importance of high productivity as we compete in world markets.

Management should have the right to terminate nonproductive employees without regard to race, sex, religion, or union affiliation. We oppose work slowdowns and other impediments to the use of labor saving technology. We especially oppose the use of force, coercion, intimidation, secondary boycotts, or other unfair means designed to force a union's will upon others.

Strikes by local, state, or federal government employees, especially where public health and safety are concerned, should be illegal. We oppose strikes in agriculture or agricultural processing plants during critical periods of farm production or harvesting. We also oppose strikes or boycotts designed to force change in U.S. foreign policy or to force the enactment of legislation. Those engaging in illegal acts should be prosecuted vigorously. Legislation should require workers to vote by secret ballot in all ratification elections. We favor the "open shop".

Agricultural labor should remain exempt from overtime requirements and mandated health insurance paid by the employer.

We oppose the Hazardous Materials Communications Standard (HAZCOM). Congress exempted farms employing fewer than 11 employees from most OSHA requirements. Congress has already given the EPA the responsibility to regulate the use of pesticides, including the protection of farm workers. HAZCOM, ordered by federal courts, directs OSHA to duplicate what the EPA regulates.

RIGHT-TO-WORK LAW

Tennessee's Right-To-Work Law must not be repealed either directly or through amendment to the Taft-Hartley Act or other federal labor laws.

IMMIGRATION

We appreciate the desire of people throughout the world to migrate to the United States of America. Our nation and our economy cannot absorb, without disruption, all the people of the world who would like to come here. America should not accept the criminals of other nations. Amnesty should not be granted to illegal aliens. Nor should amnesty or citizenship be granted for legal or illegal workers in the U.S. based upon hours of employment.

The first priority of immigration policy and enforcement must be to protect the national security of the United States. The flow of illegal immigrants into the United States must be stopped.

The second priority of immigration policy must be to find ways to encourage illegal immigrants to return to their home country but have a system in place where they can legally return, if they qualify, to fill U.S. jobs for which we do not have a willing, sufficient labor force.

It is of utmost importance for immigration reform to prioritize making a national immigration policy which is farmer friendly providing a legal agricultural workforce that would benefit producers, the farm workers, and the American consumer.

We oppose sanctions on employers as long as the employer makes a reasonable attempt to hire only legal workers. We support a reasonable guest worker program. Employers should not be forced to conduct unreasonable investigations of potential employees or maintain excessive employee records or documents.

The wage rate for H-2A employees is too high and continues to increase. Farmers pay housing, transportation, utilities, and worker's compensation, which are becoming more expensive, when, the price of crops vary with market forces.

The adverse effect wage rate (AEWR) should be frozen or even reduced until a more reasonable formula is developed. The rate should be more in accordance with either the prevailing wage or minimum wage.

Working hour arrangements for "seasonal immigrant" and H-2A workers should be decided between the employer and the worker. Seasonal work hours should not be mandated by the Department of Labor. Agricultural work must go on as nature dictates, sometimes even on holidays.

The survey process conducted by the Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, is not portraying a fair pay for the skill level required for a particular agricultural job.

Farmers are subject to many unreasonable labor and housing regulations of which no other segment of society is subject. Farmers who employ migrant and seasonal workers should be held to no higher level of accountability than any other industry.

We oppose government legal funding for non-citizen workers against American farmers. We urge UT Extension to partner with local adult education programs in developing training to assist farmers with communication skills needed when employing non-English speaking workers.

Recognizing good communication among people is necessary for a unified country and economic success of those people, we urge the U.S. Congress to pass a law establishing English as the official national language.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS & BALLOT INITIATIVES

We recommend the legislative initiative process for amending the Tennessee Constitution rather than the constitutional convention process. The legislative initiative process should effectively

narrow the scope of the provisions to be submitted in a referendum.

The method of changing the state Constitution by popular vote is not often used. When it is used, the voting public should be well informed of the proposed changes. For instance, a brief summary of the effect of the change would assist voters in making their decision.

We oppose ballot initiatives that provide a means by which a petition signed by a certain minimum number of registered voters can force a public vote on a proposed statute, constitutional amendment, or ordinance. Initiatives lack the benefits of the legislative process to debate, to compromise and to weigh the effect on other public policies or priorities. Initiatives are vulnerable to emotion and special interests capable of high spending campaigns with simplistic answers to complex issues. Initiatives require simple yes or no choices to hard questions without equal or adequate arguments from all sides.

THE ELECTION PROCESS AND POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES

In a perfect, representative democracy, citizens should have equal access and influence with their elected officials regardless of their monetary contribution. Unfortunately, money has taken on a huge role in modern politics. We believe too much money is spent on elections largely due to substantial Political Action Committee (PAC) growth.

A counterbalance is needed for campaign and issue funding and lobbying of those who have policy positions different from the agriculture community. Farm Bureau has the membership numbers to have a strong voice. We encourage Farm Bureau members to participate more actively in the political process. Advocacy is a "three-legged" stool: a comprehensive grassroots program, a professional lobby presence, and financial/political support of those who support agriculture. Pooled, small, individual contributions make an impact, create a positive relationship between the candidate and the contributing members and demonstrate a coordinated, united support.

Political contributions should be strictly controlled and limited. We support the idea of a citizen congress, and believe reasonable limits on PAC expenditures enhance the chances of returning to citizen controlled legislative bodies at both the state and federal level. The total yearly contribution of any PAC should be limited to \$100,000. Congress should treat all political campaign expenditures as either individual contributions or PAC contributions. This should include independent expenditures and educational ads that enhance one political candidate over another. We are opposed to political contributions from foreign countries.

We are gravely concerned with the level of negative campaign advertisements. The television media dramatizes negative ads to a new low in candidate bashing. This deteriorates the respect adults and especially the young population have for our elected officials. It also further damages citizen confidence in government. The impact of this trend will steer future quality candidates away from politics and society will suffer. Few people want to subject themselves or their family to such half-truths and slander. We challenge future candidates to pledge positive campaigns and focus more on the issues and their positions.

We oppose the major news media predicting the outcome of the Presidential Election before the polls close in all states. We are opposed to any labor union (such as the United Auto Workers) being allowed to negotiate a holiday (or a day off from work) on any national election day to work in the election. This denies all other voters equal access under the law as guaranteed all citizens in the U.S. Constitution.

The President should continue to be elected by the Electoral College not by popular vote.

SIGNED

2018 TFBF Resolutions Committee

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Barry Lake

Ben Moore

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Brian Peery

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Coffee County

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Loudon County

**THE MISSION
of the
TENNESSEE FARM BUREAU FEDERATION**

"To develop, foster, promote and protect programs for the general welfare, including economic, social, educational and political well-being of farm people of the great state of Tennessee."

ADOPTED FEBRUARY 15, 1923

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