

PERSPECTIVE

February 9, 2024



OKFB delegates help set grassroots AFBF policies for 2024

Five Oklahoma Farm Bureau members joined fellow farmer and rancher delegates during the business session of the 105th American Farm Bureau Convention in Salt Lake City Tuesday, Jan. 23.

Rodd Moesel, OKFB president, Leon Richards, OKFB district two director, Mike Leverett, OKFB district eight director, Brady Bond, Garfield County member and Jared Anderson, Ottawa County member served as OKFB's delegates during the session, where they reviewed proposed policy changes, gave their input on selected issues and voted on bills proposed to the delegate body.

The farmer and rancher delegates adopted policies submitted by Farm Bureau members from around the country and curated by state-level policy development processes that will guide AFBF's agricultural policy work in 2024.

Key topics ranged from artificial intelligence, to labor, to crop insurance.

"I look forward to this every year because it reaffirms your faith in people and their judgment," Moesel said of the grassroots policy development process. "There are really good people with good ideas all across the country."

Artificial intelligence

Delegates voted to create new policy to address the growth of artificial

intelligence in agriculture. AI has the potential to enhance farming practices and conserve resources, but privacy rights must be respected.

Labor

Recognizing the challenges of maintaining a strong agriculture workforce, delegates voted to stabilize wage rates for guest workers and revise H-2A and H-2B programs to better meet the needs of America's farms.

Farm bill

Delegates reaffirmed their support for increasing reference prices in the farm bill and maintaining a strong crop insurance program, including an expansion of eligibility to ensure more commodities are covered.

Foreign agricultural investment

On foreign investment, delegates added policy in support of additional funding to improve data collection on the foreign ownership of agricultural land. Delegates also voted to support the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S. reviewing foreign investments in U.S. agribusinesses, natural resources and real estate.

Contract livestock contract terms

Delegates called for changes to the

contract poultry pay system to ensure long-term economic sustainability for farmers, and to require more transparency from chicken companies.

Trade

On trade, delegates added policy to recommend Congress investigate fertilizer supply chain outages and tariffs placed on imports.

Leaders elected

In addition to policy changes, AFBF President Zippy Duvall and Vice President Scott VanderWal were unanimously re-elected for another two-year term.

Moesel had the opportunity to deliver the nominating speech for VanderWal during the election process, delivering his address to fellow AFBF delegates.

"Delegates demonstrated their readiness to seize the opportunities and take on the challenges facing agriculture," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. "It's crucial that Congress pass a new farm bill and address the labor shortage in 2024. The policy set forth by Farm Bureaus in all 50 states and Puerto Rico will guide AFBF in its efforts through the process. We look forward to making our members' unified voice heard as they work to ensure a strong food supply for America's families."



A look at OKFB's 2024 priority issues

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members have set the organization's legislative priorities ahead of Oklahoma's 2024 legislative session.

These priority issues, designed to guide the work of Farm Bureau members and staff at the state Capitol, are broken down into four primary focus areas, including rural infrastructure, Oklahoma's future, agricultural production and taxation.

Rural Infrastructure

Farm Bureau members have long supported the expansion of high-speed internet and wireless phone service in Oklahoma's most rural areas. Both are critical technological tools to ensure rural Oklahoma stays vibrant for years to come.

Continued vibrance in rural communities coincides with a thriving rural economy and access to rural health services, which is why OKFB supports investments in rural physician residency programs and programs and partnerships that increase economic opportunities in rural communities.

OKFB supports funding for improved maintenance to roads and bridges in Oklahoma to ensure residents can safely travel to and from their homes, and companies can conduct business and transport products.

OKFB members understand the important mission of land-grant universities and support increased funding for growth and modernization of Oklahoma State University Extension.

Oklahoma's Future

Farm Bureau members take pride in engaging in civic efforts and participating in local, state and national elections. In recent years, OKFB members have become increasingly concerned with the requirements for a proposal to appear on a statewide ballot and strongly support state initiative petition reform to ensure the integrity of the petition process is upheld.

As farmers and ranchers, OKFB members know the value of fair compensation for honest work, but members oppose linking the Oklahoma minimum wage to a national urban cost-of-living statistic that inaccurately represents many parts of Oklahoma's economy.

Farm Bureau members support tribal governments working with the state of Oklahoma to resolve jurisdictional questions and conflicts in light of the ongoing repercussions of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2020 *McGirt* decision.

OKFB also supports increased funding for agricultural education programs and instructors in schools around the state.

Agricultural Production

OKFB members strongly oppose all forms of increased county zoning authority as the increase in local authority could place an unnecessary burden on farmers and ranchers through restriction or prohibition of everyday agricultural practices.

Farm Bureau members strive to be excellent stewards of the land and livestock that are often their livelihoods. OKFB supports livestock regulations that are science based, economical and consistent with industry standards. OKFB also supports improved land management practices by the Commissioners of the Land Office.

Taxation

Farm Bureau members oppose new or increased ad valorem taxes as these property taxes unfairly burden farmers and ranchers who often have a large amount of land and capital that does not always generate a profit. Similarly, OKFB supports the exemption of livestock and unmanufactured farm products from ad valorem taxation.

OKFB also opposes the elimination of the state income tax as members are concerned that the state may turn to property taxes to recoup lost revenue from the tax cuts.

Tune in for OKFB's weekly legislative updates on Zoom

Want the latest information and updates on Oklahoma Farm Bureau's efforts at the State Capitol during the 2024 Oklahoma legislative session? Be sure to tune into our Zoom legislative updates every **Friday** at **noon** during session for a weekly update from OKFB's public policy staff.

Learn how to join the weekly calls by contacting your field representative.

OKFB Capitol Camp, OYLA youth event applications now available online

Applications are now available for both the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Oklahoma Youth Leading Agriculture conference and the OKFB Capitol Camp legislative experience.

Application forms are available on the OKFB website at okfarmbureau.org/applications and include detailed information about the programs and how to apply. Below you can find basic information on the two events and who should apply for each.

Oklahoma Youth Leading Agriculture	OKFB Capitol Camp
Dates: May 28-31 • Held in the OKC area	Dates: June 12-13 • Oklahoma City
What it is: OYLA is a four-day summer leadership conference hosted by OKFB for incoming high school seniors that includes leadership development, industry tours, team building and more.	What it is: Capitol Camp is a two-day legislative experience for high school students to learn about the lawmaking process through a mock legislature held on the floor of the Oklahoma House of Representatives Chamber.
Who should apply: High school students who will complete their senior year during the 2024-2025 school year. Students are not required to be Farm Bureau members.	Who should apply: 4-H or FFA members who will be juniors or seniors during the 2024-2025 school year. Students are not required to be Farm Bureau members.
Application deadline: Applications must be postmarked no later than April 1, 2024 .	Application deadline: Applications must be postmarked no later than April 1, 2024 .

Applications for both OYLA and Capitol Camp are available on the OKFB website at okfarmbureau.org/applications

Oklahoma broadband expansion grants approved for 142 projects

More than 55,000 Oklahoma homes and businesses are one step closer to receiving high-speed internet service, thanks to votes on Jan. 26 by the Oklahoma Broadband Governing Board to authorize broadband infrastructure expansion projects in 57 counties. Once all necessary agreements are executed, the 142 approved projects would provide broadband to nearly a quarter of locations without such service today.

In a first-of-its-kind investment in Oklahoma, the legislature designated ARPA State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds to create and administer the broadband investment grant program. Grant funds of \$374 million will be coupled with more than \$90 million in matching funds from 31 internet service providers that submitted approved

proposals for service expansion.

“Governor Stitt and the legislature’s vision to make broadband service available statewide is clearly taking root,” said Jim Meek, board chair and OKFB state director. “With hundreds of applications and over \$5.1 billion in funding requests, I commend the board for its dedication and the broadband office staff for its expertise in bringing to fruition this historic first grant program to bridge the digital divide.”

All projects must be completed before the end of 2026. The final list of funded projects is subject to some modification. If an approved provider chooses to withdraw participation, funding will move to the next project on the list until available funding is obligated with the approval of the board.

Oklahoma Supreme Court hears oral arguments in minimum wage case

The Oklahoma Supreme Court heard oral arguments on Wednesday, Jan. 31, in the case to raise Oklahoma’s minimum wage.

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Legal Foundation joined with the Oklahoma State Chamber in November 2023 to oppose Initiative Petition 446, which would establish a state question to raise Oklahoma’s minimum wage.

The initiative seeks to double the minimum wage by 2029 and increase it annually beginning in 2030 based on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers. This change would remove the duty of determining a minimum wage from the Oklahoma legislature and instead tie it to national economic projections that do not directly reflect Oklahoma’s economy.

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Okmulgee County Farm Bureau hosts booth to share ag tour program at AFBF convention

Members of the Okmulgee County Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee hosted a booth showcasing their county ag tour for fellow Farm Bureau members from around the nation at the American Farm Bureau Convention in January.

Okmulgee County hosted their booth in the convention trade show alongside fellow county Farm Bureaus that were honored for outstanding programs and innovative ideas through the AFBF County Awards of Excellence program.

During the convention, Okmulgee County YF&R members visited with fellow Farm Bureau members as they shared their ag tour concept along with how they planned and executed the tour.



(Above) American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall presents members of the Okmulgee County Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee with their 2024 AFBF County Activities of Excellence Award at the 2024 AFBF Convention.



Watch our video with Okmulgee County YF&R member Tim Taylor at the AFBF 2024 Convention by scanning this code with your phone

