

FARMERS DAY AT THE CAPITOL 2023



Public Affairs & Government Relations

Stanley Hill
Vice President
Public Affairs & Government Relations
(501) 831-5564 | stanley.hill@arfb.com

Philip Powell
Director, Local Affairs & Rural Development
(501) 366-0110 | philip.powell@arfb.com

Jarrod Yates
Director
(501) 366-8698 | jarrod.yates@arfb.com

Catrinia Rojas
Policy Development &
Legislative Research Coordinator
(501) 912-7269 | catrinia.rojas@arfb.com

Mark Lambert
Director, State Affairs
(501) 519-1209 | mark.lambert@arfb.com

Hannah Gage
Assistant
(501) 228-1305 | hannah.gage@arfb.com



P.O. Box 31
Little Rock, AR 72203

To sign up for ArFB updates, TEXT:

ARFB to 52886

Updates include:

- Legislative updates • Action items
- News alerts • Farm program information



The 94th General Assembly concluded its regular session on May 1, 2023, with a final tally of 1,658 bills filed, 890 of which will become law.



I'm proud to share that our team worked diligently to advocate on behalf of Arkansas Farm Bureau (ArFB) members and their legislative priorities during the 89-day session. These efforts resulted in several major achievements, which will undoubtedly have a significant and lasting impact on the farmers and ranchers in Arkansas.

Some of our team's achievements include improved access to affordable healthcare, a robust agriculture education curriculum for elementary students in the state, continuation of animal medicine sales at farm stores and farm cooperatives, fencing law reform and streamlining the H-2A driver's license process.

During the session, we were glad to host the return of Farmer's Day at the Capitol, an event that had been absent since 2019. On March 1st, more than 300 ArFB members and advocates joined us in Little Rock to take part in the legislative process and share a meal with legislators to say thanks for their work on our industry's behalf. Thank you for making that event a priority in your counties this year.

During the session, ArFB members actively engaged with legislators by directly advocating for various bills, resulting in over 1,450 contacts. This level of participation from our members was crucial to our success, and we greatly appreciate you taking the time to make your voices heard, ensuring that our industry's interests were represented in the legislative process.

Arkansas Farm Bureau's advocacy efforts serve as an example of how citizen engagement can make a significant impact in shaping public policy. We thank you for your continued support and look forward to continuing our work to support the agriculture community in Arkansas.

Our members are grateful to the elected officials who serve Arkansas and acknowledge the various sacrifices required to offer themselves up for public service.

Stanley Hill, Vice President, Public Affairs & Government Relations

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES:

✓ Affordable Health Benefit Programs for our Members and Arkansans

- **SB 324 / Act 626** Sen. J. Dismang (R-Beebe) & Rep. L. Johnson (R-Greenwood) — Allows nonprofit agricultural membership organizations the ability to offer tailored health benefit options to its membership. As a result, Arkansas farmers and ranchers will have more options to consider for their family's health coverage.

✓ Expands Supplemental Agricultural Elementary Education

- **HB 1336 / Act 243** Rep. B. Cozart (R-Hot Springs) & Sen. K. Hammer (R-Benton) — Creates a fact-based agricultural education program for elementary school students in Arkansas. The pilot program will be underwritten by Arkansas Farm Bureau and aims to provide students in grades K-6 with a basic understanding of agriculture.



✓ State Plant Board

- **SB 191 / Act 135** Sen. D. Wallace (R-Leachville) & Rep. L. Eaves (R-Searcy) — This legislation will change how board members are appointed to the State Plant Board by repealing provisions that currently require members to be appointed from lists of candidates submitted by industry groups.

✓ Common Sense Livestock Fencing Laws

- **HB 1677 / Act 594** Rep. H. Beaty (R-Crossett) & Sen. B. Gilmore (R-Crossett) — Changes the law regarding livestock running at large, impounding stray animals and repeals the law regarding fencing districts.

✓ Streamline Drivers Licensing Process

- **HB 1548 / Act 550** Rep. M. McElroy (R-Tillar) & Sen. D. Wallace (R-Leachville) — Removes the requirement that original driver's license applicants must wait at least 30 days to take a driver's test after receiving an instruction/learner's permit, which will speed up the process for H2-A workers to obtain an Arkansas driver's license.

✓ Veterinarians

- **SB 476 / Act 706** Sen. R. Hill (R-Cabot) & Rep. D. Vaught (R-Horatio) — Creates the Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program and the Agri Scholarship Program Fund, allows the Department of Agriculture to establish and administer scholarship programs for students seeking degrees in agriculture-related fields.
- **HB 1182 / Act 161** Rep. D. Vaught (R-Horatio) & Sen. R. Hill (R-Cabot) — Requires the Veterinary Medical Examining Board to issue additional certifications for a veterinary technician specialist. Outlines requirements for collaborative practice agreements between veterinarians and veterinary technician specialists.

- **HB 1662 / Act 591** Rep. C. Puryear (R-Hindsville) & Sen. J. Payton (R-Wilburn) — Exempts the sale of veterinary drugs and medicine from certain licensure requirements. This change permits wholesalers, distributors, pharmacies, or farm stores to directly sell or ship animal antibiotics.

✓ Renewable Energy Policies and Programs

- **SB 407 / Act 693** Sen. M. McKee (R-Pearcy) and Rep. H. Beaty (R-Crossett) — Requires energy generated from certain sources to be deemed carbon neutral and energy produced from certain sources in conjunction with carbon capture technologies to be considered carbon negative.
- **SB 295 / Act 278** Sen. J. Dismang (R-Beebe) & Rep. L. Fite (R-Benton) — Changes the method for calculating the rates paid by electric utilities to net-metering customers generating excess solar power is changing. This bill also extends the "grandfathering" of net-metering regulations for certain solar projects.

✓ Right to Farm

- **HB 1434 / Act 367** Rep. D. Vaught (R-Horatio) & Sen. B. Johnson (R-Corning) — The law is being amended to change the burden of proof regarding agricultural operations. The burden of proof will now be placed on the party who brings an action against an agricultural operation as a nuisance.

✓ Boards & Commissions

- **SB 403 / Act 691** Sen. B. Johnson (R-Corning) & Rep. D. Vaught (R-Horatio) — Consolidates and abolishes certain boards within the Department of Agriculture and transfers the powers/duties of these abolished boards to the Department of Agriculture.
- **SB 506 / Act 712** Sen. B. Davis (R-Russellville) & Rep. S. Painter (R-Mountain Home) — Transfers the administrative function of agricultural promotion boards from Arkansas Farm Bureau to the Department of Agriculture through a cabinet-level transfer. Arkansas Farm Bureau and its members have long-standing policy supporting agriculture promotion boards being administered by Farm Bureau or having the ability to choose their administrator. Arkansas Farm Bureau opposed this legislation, however, it was passed and enacted.
- **HB 1843*** Rep. D. Haak (R-Gentry) & Sen. G. Stubblefield (R-Branch) — This legislation would have addressed the board member appointment process and made it constitutionally compatible by requiring board members who are principally and actively engaged in production, . . . appointed by the Governor, and confirmed by the Senate. This bill was passed in the House Agriculture Committee but did not receive a majority of votes to pass in the full State House of Representatives. Arkansas Farm Bureau supported this bill as an effort to ensure constitutionality and give farmers and ranchers who serve on these research and promotion boards the ability to choose a governance model to best serve their needs.

You can find the context of all bills and acts at www.arkleg.state.ar.us.

TAX LEGISLATION:

- **SB 549 / Act 532** Sen. J. Dismang (R-Beebe) & Rep. L. Eaves (R-Searcy) — Reduces the income tax rates applicable to individuals from 4.9% to 4.7% and corporations from 5.3% to 5.1% effective Jan. 1, 2023. This legislation also effects the rates for trusts and estates.

- **HB 1032 / Act 315** Rep. L. Fite (R-Benton) & Sen. J. Hickey (R-Texarkana) — Increases the amount of the homestead property tax credit from \$375 to \$425.

- **HB 1045 / Act 485** Rep. H. Beaty (R-Crossett) & B. Gilmore (R-Crossett) — Phases out the income tax apportionment throwback rule that applies to the apportionment of business income, full phase out occurs for tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2030.

- **HB 1172 / Act 534** Rep. D. Vaught (R-Horatio) & Sen. T. Dees (R-Siloam Springs) — Creates a sales and use tax exemption for mortality composting devices sold to a commercial livestock or poultry producer.

- **HB 1779 / Act 845** Rep. J. Wardlaw (R-Hermitage) & Sen. B. Gilmore (R-Crossett) — Amends the wood energy products and forest maintenance income tax credit to allow an income tax credit for wood energy products and forest maintenance expansion projects.

- **HB 1003*** Rep. J. Mayberry (R-Hensley) & Rep. D. Garner (D-Fayetteville) — Would have created a non-refundable income tax credit for beginning farmers and owners of agricultural assets who sell or rent to beginning farmers.

- **HB 1680*** Rep. J. Wardlaw (R-Hermitage) & Sen. M. Irvin (R-Mountain View) — Would have established an Arkansas private lands conservation income tax credit equivalent to the value of certified conservation practices. This legislation was supported by the Arkansas Game and Fish

*Legislation that was proposed, but not passed.



OTHER AGRICULTURAL LEGISLATION:

- **HB 1706 / Act 824** Rep. D. Vaught (R-Horatio) & Sen. B. Johnson (R-Corning) — Transfers the authority to manage liquid animal waste systems from the Department of Energy and Environment to the Department of Agriculture.

- **HB 1827 / Act 600** Rep. J. Milligan (R-Lake City) — Amended the Arkansas Poultry Feeding Operations Registration Act requiring poultry feeders to register with the state and follow certain regulations to protect the environment and public health.

- **HB 1707 / Act 530** Rep. D. Vaught (R-Horatio) & Sen. B. Johnson (R-Corning) — Amends the Arkansas Soil Nutrient Application and Poultry Litter Utilization Act to provide that nutrient management plans and poultry litter management plans are not public records.

- **SB 383 / Act 636** Sen. B. Johnson (R-Corning) & Rep. D. Vaught (R-Horatio) — Prohibits certain foreign parties from acquiring any interest in Arkansas agricultural land, provides penalties for violations, creates the Office of Agricultural Intelligence for information analysis and enforcement.

- **SB 415 / Act 695** Sen. M. Stone (R-Camden) & Rep. H. Beaty (R-Crossett) — Outlines requirements for conducting a prescribed burning of forestland.

- **HB 1710 / Act 746** Rep. R. McClure (R-Malvern) — Creates the Rural Economic Development Initiative to provide funds for planning and development districts and distribution to projects in rural areas.

- **SB 508 / Act 713** Sen. J. Payton (R-Wilburn) & Rep. J. Gonzales (R-Okolona) — Amends the Used Tire Recycling and Accountability Act, repeal rim removal fees, implement a tire recycling fee, establish tire accountability zones, and transfer reimbursement authority to the Department of Finance and Administration.

The state legislature approved one constitutional amendment out of 33 filed to send to Arkansas voters for their consideration on the November 2024 ballot:

- **HJR1006** Rep. R. Lundstrum (R-Elm Springs) & J. English (R-North Little Rock) — The proposed amendment would allow lottery proceeds to fund or provide scholarships and grants to Arkansas citizens in vocational-technical schools and technical institutes. Furthermore, it provides much-needed financial assistance to students pursuing vocational-technical education, which is critical for many high-demand jobs in the state.

