



AUSTIN NEWSLETTER

Texas Farm Bureau's Weekly Newsletter for the 89th Legislature

January 17, 2025 | Regular Session, Issue 1 | 89th Regular Session

The 89th Session of the Texas Legislature convened at the Capitol on Tuesday, January 14. Every Friday, this newsletter will keep you up to date on the session and legislation important to Texas Farm Bureau members.

The Texas Farm Bureau Board of Directors adopted the following priorities for the 89th Session of the Texas Legislature:

Taxes

Ensure state tax policy does not adversely impact or burden agriculture producers or the agriculture industry. Protect the current state tax provisions that limit the burden on producing food, fiber and other agricultural products for consumers.

Water

Protect the rights of landowners and agriculture producers to surface water and groundwater. Oppose legislation that attempts to take any constitutionally protected rights to water. Support adequate funding for water projects, including a dedicated source of funding.

Right to Farm & Ranch

Support the protection of generally accepted agricultural practices under current law and support any changes in statute or the Texas Constitution to strengthen those protections.

Property Rights

Protect the ownership and use of private property from regulatory overreach, unconstitutional takings, or unreasonable effects of eminent domain. Support programs or policies to maintain agricultural use of land in a manner consistent with private property rights.

Transportation

Ensure vehicle, trailer and driver license regulations do not adversely impact or burden agricultural producers or the agricultural industry. Oppose any efforts at the state level in support of a high-speed rail project.

Animal Care

Protect the ability of agricultural producers to utilize generally accepted, scientifically proven production practices for livestock, poultry, and other animals present on agricultural operations.

Hostile Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land

Supports changes in statute that would prevent the foreign landownership of agricultural land that results in an unfair trade advantage or endangers U.S. national security.

Sunset Legislation

Ensure that sunset legislation of state agencies related to agriculture or TFB priority issues benefits our members.

These priorities will guide the organization and staff in effectively utilizing our time and resources when taking action on legislation.

Texas Farm Bureau State Legislative Team

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Regan Beck, Director of Government Affairs

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Regan Beck serves as the director of Government Affairs for Texas Farm Bureau. Regan leads the Legislative, Political and Commodity and Regulatory Activities areas. He coordinates the Legal Defense Fund activities in policy-related litigation and also oversees AGFUND, Texas Farm Bureau's political action committee.

Before joining the staff, Regan served as the Concho County Farm Bureau president and on numerous Farm Bureau state committees. He also served two terms as a member of the USDA National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee.

Billy Howe, Associate Director of Government Affairs

Issue Areas: Natural Resources, Environmental Regulations, Ethics & Elections, and Appropriations

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Billy Howe has advocated in Austin for Texas Farm Bureau since 1999. He was state legislative director from 2002 until 2016 and has served as associate director of Government Affairs since 2016.

Prior to joining Texas Farm Bureau, Billy served as staff in the Texas House Representatives. Billy has over 30 years of legislative experience. He has played significant roles in major legislative efforts related to private property rights and water policy.

Charlie Leal, State Legislative Director

Issue Areas: Right to Farm & Ranch, Utility Regulation, Transportation Infrastructure, Trucking Regulations, Liability, and Appropriations

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Charlie Leal joined Texas Farm Bureau as the state legislative director in December 2020. In his role, he is responsible for coordinating and directing the activities of the state legislative program in Austin to advance Farm Bureau's policies at the state level. Charlie also currently serves as vice chair of the Texas Agriculture Council, a coalition of over 60 agricultural-related organizations.

Before joining Texas Farm Bureau, Charlie served as a budget and policy advisor to Gov. Gregg Abbott. Charlie has over 20 years of combined policy, legislative, campaign and government relations experience, including experience as staff for members of both the Texas House of Representatives and Texas Senate.

Blake Roach, Associate Legislative Director

Issue Areas: Foreign Ownership, Property Rights/Land Use Regulation, Energy Regulation, Eminent Domain, Wildlife, Criminal Justice, & Appropriations

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Blake Roach is an associate legislative director for Texas Farm Bureau's Government Affairs division. He joined the organization in December 2022.

Before joining Texas Farm Bureau, Blake was an appointments manager in the Office of Appointments for Gov. Gregg Abbott. In that role, he managed the gubernatorial appointments of various state boards, commissions and agencies. Blake also worked as a policy advisor in the Budget and Policy division of the governor's office where he handled agriculture and natural resources policy matters.

Drew Fuller, Associate Legislative Director

Issue Areas: Agriculture, Taxes, Rural Affairs, Labor, & Appropriations

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Drew Fuller joined Texas Farm Bureau as an associate legislative director in September 2024 and currently works in the legislative office in Austin.

Prior to joining Texas Farm Bureau, Drew served as the legislative director and in other roles for State Rep. DeWayne Burns in the Texas House of Representatives for nearly six years. During his time as legislative director, he assisted Burns in passing the right to farm and ranch legislation. He also aided on various issues and policy areas including taxation,

appropriations, education, agriculture and more. Drew also previously staffed and managed various political campaigns.

Janelle Aello, Legislative Assistant

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Janelle Aello serves as the legislative assistant for Texas Farm Bureau's legislative office in Austin. She joined the Government Affairs division in May 2022.

Janelle grew up on the outskirts of Laredo in a small community called Ranchitos Las Lomas, where her family owns land, manages a family feed store and an air conditioning business. Janelle received her Bachelor of Science in Animal Science from Texas A&M Kingsville.

Kaitlyn Cloud, Legislative Intern

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Kaitlyn Cloud is serving as the legislative intern for Texas Farm Bureau during the 89th session of the Texas Legislature. A native of Carthage, Missouri, she is a recent graduate of Texas A&M University, where she earned a degree in Agricultural Communications & Journalism.

Kaitlyn will work closely with the legislative team in tracking and monitoring bills related to Texas Farm Bureau's priorities. In the summer of 2022, she was a member of the Ag Voices of the Future program in Washington D.C., where she furthered her love of public policy. After her internship, she plans to continue her education and obtain a master's degree in public affairs.