

## Common Ground Digest Week of September 16, 2024

### *Media*

See a [Farmweek](#) story and [RFD interview](#) with Illinois Farm Bureau President Brian Duncan and COUNTRY CEO Jim Jacobs highlighting the COUNTRY Sept. 11 announcement of changing the Farm Bureau membership underwriting requirement for non-farm clients in Illinois beginning in 2025.

### *New County Farm Bureau FAQs*

#### **Q: How will IFB pay for this new Mitigation Grant Program?**

**A:** We are confident IFB has the resources to fund this Mitigation Grant Program, and we do not anticipate impacts to IFB's existing programs and services.

#### **Q: Will IFB be providing something in writing guaranteeing these grants into the future? Will something be signed by IFB?**

**A:** The new Mitigation Grant Program has been approved by the IFB Board, but it is a grant program, not a contract. This is consistent with how we handle other programs like this, including the current Grant Program under the second partnership. That program is managed under the purview and discretion of the IFB Board. The handout your CFB received at the September 11, 2024, meeting outlines the program as it was approved by the IFB Board.

#### **Q: Will CFBs be allowed to take back billing for Associate Members as part of this change?**

**A:** Currently the bylaws provide that Associate Members are billed by IFB, at its expense. If the CFBs want to begin billing for their Associate Members, they need to propose a bylaw amendment to reflect that change.

#### **Q: Can we raise Associate Member dues?**

**A:** Currently the IFB bylaws provide that Associate Member dues to Illinois Farm Bureau are \$10, and the Uniform Cooperative Agreement provides that Associate Member dues to the county Farm Bureaus are \$10. Amendments to the IFB bylaws and/or Uniform Cooperative Agreement would be necessary to change these amounts.

#### **Q: What's the future of Partners Magazine?**

**A:** Partners Magazine will continue until we get a clearer picture of our future A member landscape.

#### **Q: What are the impacts to IFB resources and programs?**

**A:** We are confident IFB has the resources to implement the financial mitigation plan for county Farm Bureaus and that there will not be any disruption in IFB programs and services.

#### **Q: Has the decision been made to eliminate A members?**

**A:** No. This would require a bylaw amendment. IFB is working with county Farm Bureaus on a new associate member marketing campaign.

**Q: Will Abenity be turned off?**

**A:** No. Our tangible member benefits won't be affected for members accessing the Abenity Application.

**Q: Will IFB help county Farm Bureaus evaluate rental rates for COUNTRY reps in their buildings?**

**A:** If a county Farm Bureau needs assistance with a lease agreement, they can contact either their own counsel or OGC for a form lease agreement. However, the negotiation of rental terms, including rates, with reps will need to be handled by the county Farm Bureaus.

**Q: In regard to the grant program, will there be another freeze in the dues amount?**

**A:** The grant programs under the Second Partnership (AFBI) are administered by the Illinois Farm Bureau board, with assistance from the Grant Committee. So, any changes to grant program criteria would need to be approved by the board.

**Q: How does this impact IFB delegate strength at AFBF?**

**A:** Illinois Farm Bureau's delegate strength at the American Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting is based upon total membership (both voting and non-voting). Thus, any decrease in Illinois Farm Bureau membership could decrease the number of delegates at AFBF.

**Q: How does this change impact our advocacy efforts at the state and national levels?**

**A:** The impact of the changes of removing the underwriting requirement for non-farm insurance clients will have no impact on the organization's efforts at the state and national policy implementation level. In our lobbying efforts we shifted to focusing only on our farmer members in our lobbying endeavors over 20 years ago. This approach better reflects the emphasis on the goal of improving the economic well-being of agriculture. Also, we found it much more difficult to explain the difference between our membership numbers and actual farm census data. Focusing on farmer members better allowed us to show that we represent a majority of farmers in Illinois.

**Q: Will there be fewer IFB Districts in the future?**

**A:** No. A change to the number of IFB districts would require a bylaw amendment.

**Q: It was a bylaw change that put combined billing into place, will it take a bylaw change to change it?**

**A:** No. A bylaw amendment isn't necessary to stop combined billing.

**Q: Will there be any financial mitigation from IFB to support cFB PACs, Foundations, or AITC programs?**

**A:** That was not figured into the mitigation plan, however since we will be sending out all standalone bills to our A members, counties can add a line item asking for a donation to CFB PACs, Foundations, and AITC Programs.

**Q: When will combined bill cease?**

**A:** Since COUNTRY will not be requiring Farm Bureau membership for Personal Lines and Commercial policies, combined bill will be winding down and discontinuing in Illinois by Dec. 31, 2024.

**Q: How will associate member dues billing work?**

**A:** It will work the same way it does now for associate member stand-alone billing and voting membership. As combined billing winds down, the volume of stand-alone bills will go up. Stand-alone billing will be fully transitioned back to Illinois Farm Bureau for memberships that begin January 1 and after.

**Q: How will refund requests be handled for A members that renew or reinstate their membership before the end of 2024?**

**A:** If a member has paid their dues early, and requests a refund before their membership year begins, they can receive a refund. Once their membership year has begun, IFB's general policy is that no refunds will be issued. Members who are seeking a refund should contact the Farm Bureau directly.

**Q: Will the M membership cost increase for members?**

**A:** The dues rate for M members are currently determined by local county Farm Bureaus.

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