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2026 Local Government Priorities

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Identifying local government priorities to foster support and drive engagement for agriculture



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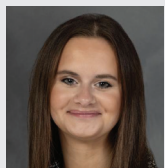


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Our Mission

To improve county Farm Bureau® influence in local government issues and advance county Farm Bureau leaders' awareness, capability, and involvement in local government through information and assistance in understanding and planning on local government issues.

Call to Action

We encourage you to share LINK with county Farm Bureau leadership and membership.

We invite you to share this publication with your local officials. This information may be a LINK to their success.

For information on past editions of the LINK publication and to access copies, please click [here](#).

Upcoming Dates & Events

January 15-16:

[Illinois Association of Drainage Districts Annual Conference](#)

January 28-30:

[From Food to Flowers: Everything Local Conference](#)

February 17:

[Governmental Affairs Leadership Conference \(GALC\)](#)

February 25-26:

[Rural Community and Economic Development Conference](#)

March 17:

Primary Election Day



Ring in the New Year With a Commitment to Local Government and Rural Development

As the new year is fast approaching and your annual resolutions are being considered, think about how county Farm Bureaus and local units of government can work together over the next year to prioritize agriculture and rural living.

To help with that, your IFB local government team has identified priorities for 2026 that will strengthen our relationships with local officials and influence local issues impacting farming operations and quality of life for farmers and rural residents.

The IFB Board of Directors approved the 2026 Local Government Priorities and supports these goals that align with IFB's mission *"To Improve the Economic Well-Being of Agriculture and Enrich the Quality of Farm Family Life."*

As we prepare to kick off our fifth year establishing local government priorities, we can look back on previous priorities that led to successful relationships, issue resolutions and

program development across our counties and communities. For example, more than half of our counties have passed a Pro-Ag Resolution, becoming Allies in Agriculture. We have distributed \$130,000 in rural development grants and influenced countless regulations impacting farmland development and land-use planning. We have worked together to share information with our membership and elected officials on property assessment and taxation, and we've hosted programs that promote fiscal responsibility and support for local services important to agriculture.

Based on this success and the momentum that has grown with each year, the 2026 priorities will continue to address similar topics while still moving the needle on engagement.

Read through this edition of LINK to unwrap the 2026 Local Government Priorities.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES 2026



GROWING ALLIES IN AGRICULTURE

The local government team will work with county Farm Bureaus (CFBs) to promote, enhance and expand the Allies in Agriculture program and further cultivate relationships between CFBs and units of local government by:

- Encouraging the initial adoption of a Pro-Agriculture Resolution in those counties that have never partnered with their CFB through the program. We will also assist CFBs with the renewal of the resolution in those counties that have adopted the resolution in a previous cycle.
- Co-sponsoring CFB-initiated events and programs designed to honor local officials in counties that have adopted a Pro-Agriculture Resolution and where the CFB has expressed interest in this sort of partnership with IFB.
- Exploring the adoption of a Pro-Agriculture Resolution by municipalities identified by CFBs that have partnered with the agricultural sector.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE, FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY

The local government team, working with county Farm Bureaus (CFBs), will advocate for: 1) a stronger understanding of local government finance, 2) financial transparency by all units of local government, and 3) the long-term sustainability of property assessments impacting agriculture. This will include:

- Communicating local government expenditure obligations and support for uniform budgeting. Focusing on county government fund accounting, truth in taxation, budget hearings, reporting and auditing requirements.
- Working with CFB staff and leadership on Illinois' overall tax policy, property assessment process and taxation.
- Communicating the relationship between property assessment and property taxes.
- Tracking trends in local government funding across county and state boundaries.
- Educating policy makers on the farmland assessment formula.

LAND-USE REGULATIONS, AUTHORITY AND PLANNING

The local government team will work with county Farm Bureaus (CFBs) to monitor, evaluate and influence county and municipal land-use regulations and authority, including local ordinances impacting agriculture, renewable energy and industrial development near rural areas. We will assist CFBs by:

- Utilizing IFB database and mapping tools to identify local land-use regulations.
- Encouraging zoned counties and municipalities to maintain a relevant definition and understanding of agriculture and agritourism.
- Encouraging counties and municipalities to create or update land-use plans and ordinances that prioritize the preservation of agriculture.

- Providing the tools to identify and address county government overreach when regulating agriculture and agritourism.
- Providing guidance on the siting of proposed renewable energy projects and data centers in zoned and un-zoned counties including impacts on drainage, water use and electricity demand.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The local government team, working with county Farm Bureaus (CFBs), will continue to focus on rural development with an emphasis on providing a positive advantage for our farmers and all members throughout rural Illinois. We will seek to be a catalyst to drive attention to rural community development and quality of life issues. These efforts will include:

- Facilitating CFB manager participation with rural development organizations and events.
- Partnering with organizations and key stakeholders focused on rural issues at the local, state and federal levels to the benefit of traditional farmer members and rural residents who could benefit from membership.
- Continuing support for rural areas through the Rural Development Grant Program, encouraging CFB's to engage with grant projects, recognize grant recipients and develop an ongoing relationship with these valued partners in their communities.

ACTION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

The local government team will utilize the results from the 2025 Local Government Political Engagement Survey to assist county Farm Bureaus (CFBs) with implementing priorities, programs and events designed to foster engagement with local government officials by:

- Conducting events to demonstrate the process for and benefits of developing local policy to guide CFBs' decisions and actions when issues impacting agriculture or rural living arise.
- Encouraging and assisting CFBs to develop programs and events that foster relationships between the CFB and local officials.
- Pairing CFBs that have expressed interest in furthering their involvement with local government officials with CFBs that have developed robust local engagement practices and procedures.
- Developing tools and resources to assist CFBs and our membership to build and grow their relationships with local government officials.



2026 Brings Focus on Local Engagement

In 2026, Illinois Farm Bureau's local government team will work to ensure that CFBs have the resources, information and programs they need to establish relationships with local officials and gain allies at the level of government where choices and policies directly impact the daily lives of residents.

Allies in Agriculture

As we enter the fifth overall year of the Allies in Agriculture program and second year of the 2025–2026 cycle, we will encourage the initial adoption of a Pro-Agriculture Resolution in the 28 counties that have never participated in the program. We will also expand the program by offering to co-sponsor CFB events that promote cooperation and dialogue with local officials in those counties that are current Allies in Agriculture.

Implementing the Local Government Political Engagement Survey

In August of 2025, we surveyed CFBs to better understand their level of engagement with local officials and

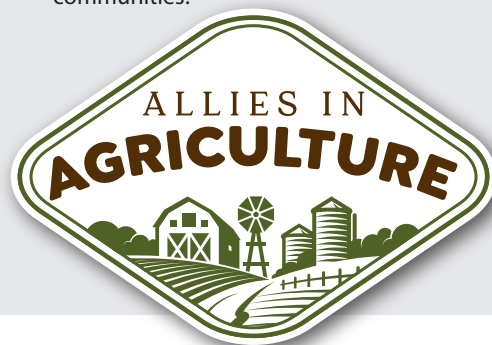
governments and where we can be of assistance in establishing or growing their connections with these officials. More information on this survey is available in the [October issue of LINK](#). In 2026, we will put the results of the survey into action by assisting CFBs that expressed interest in being more engaged at the local level.

We will do this by working closely with CFBs that have developed robust local engagement tools and programs to create models for other CFBs to use in implementing their own practices locally. This includes processes for developing local policies to guide CFB actions when situations impacting local agriculture or rural living arise and creating programs and events that encourage dialogue between CFBs and their local officials.

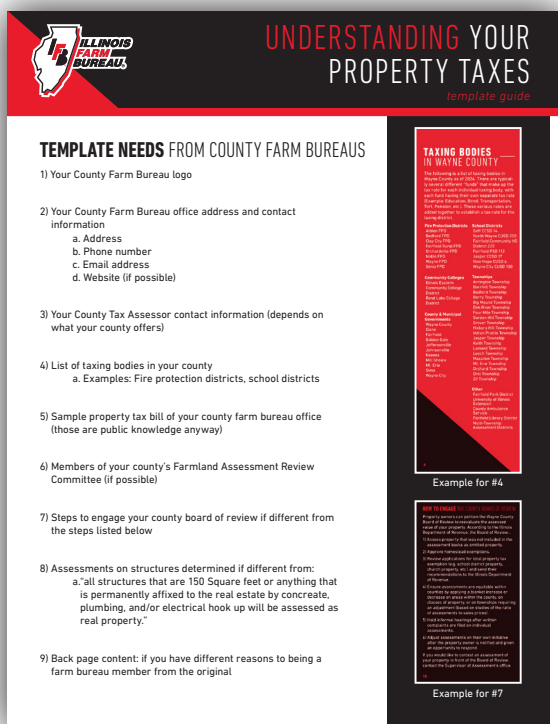
Finally, we will also develop and provide tools and resources to ensure CFBs have the information they need to stay engaged with local government.

This includes a new “Know Your County” resource on county boards and countywide officials for each county in the state. This resource will list and, where applicable, include hyperlinks to data on elected officials, their political party affiliation, terms of office and other pertinent information. We will also continue to add resources for CFB leadership to use on IFB’s Leaders’ Portal and for our membership on IFB’s main website – [ILFB.org](#).

These priorities will assist CFBs in forming relationships with local officials and ensuring farmers' voices are represented in the policies and decisions that directly affect the long-term prosperity of their industry, livelihoods and local communities.



Prepare your Members for Property Taxes!

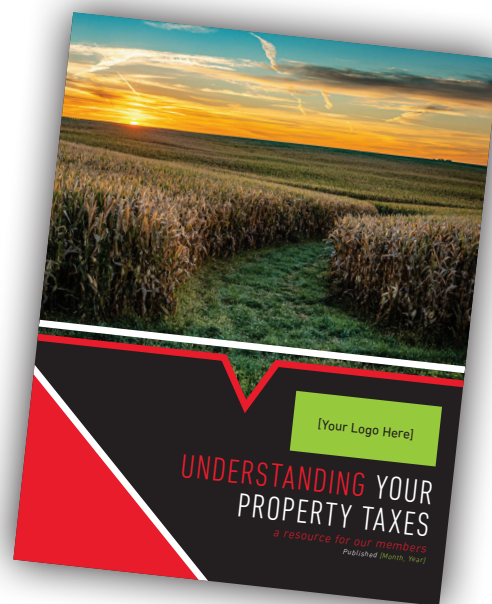


Discussions on the farmland assessment law and property taxes are a priority for farmers. Take a proactive approach on this topic by offering this booklet, customized to your county, on the basics of the farmland assessment law and its impact on taxation.

The booklet shares resources and information on farmland property assessments and taxes.

Customize it for your county with logo, tax information, and county officials.

Contact your marketing specialist to start your booklet!



LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE PRIORITY

What the Data Shows

Your local government team continues to use tools and outreach such as LINK, MyIFB.org, the Leaders’ Portal and face-to-face meetings to share and receive information on local government finance. Locally, county Farm Bureaus are advocating for a balance between the services provided by local units of government and responsible spending of taxpayer dollars.

These efforts require ongoing education on local government finance, tracking revenue and expenditures and promoting procedures that foster transparency.

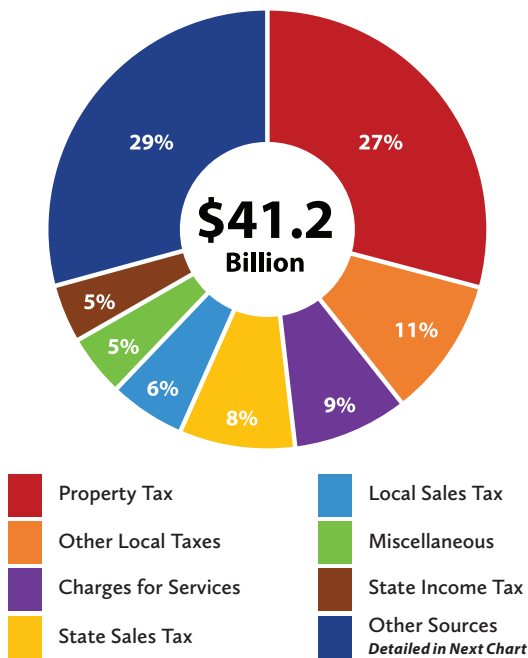
As we prepare to kick off the new year and engage on our 2026 Local Government Priorities, a good place to begin is with a general overview of local government revenue and expenditure trends for many of our local units across the state.

Much of the data summaries used below were pulled from the Illinois State Comptroller’s “Fiscal Responsibility Report Card.” This is an annual report that compiles self-reported financial information for approximately 4,800 units of local government, which include counties, municipalities, townships, library districts, park districts, fire protection districts and other special purpose districts. The report *does not* include data on school districts.

Revenue:
Local government revenue sources include property taxes, local sales taxes, state sales tax, intergovernmental revenue, local fines and fees, charges for services and federal grant dollars.

Local Government Revenue by Source

Illinois State Comptroller’s 2023 Fiscal Responsibility Report Card



Locally imposed taxes make up the largest percentage of these revenue sources. These include property, local sales, utility and various other taxes. Based on the 2023 Fiscal Responsibility Report Card (the most recent report available), these local taxes account for 47% of local government revenue. Below is a chart that better defines these local taxes:

Property Tax	A tax that local governments charge on real estate you own. This property includes land, homes and buildings.
Local Sale & Use Tax	An additional tax imposed by local governments on top of the statewide sales and use tax on local purchases.
Utility Tax	Taxes on gross receipts of public or privately owned utilities providing gas, electric and water to residents.

State revenue sharing also provides significant funding for local units of government. Revenue sources such as state sales and income tax, motor fuel tax, state replacement tax and state gaming tax contribute a little over 25% of local government revenue. Below is a chart that better defines a few of these state taxes:

State Income Tax	A state shared, flat-rate tax on income earned by individuals and businesses within the state.
State Sales Tax	A state shared 6.25% tax imposed on the sale of most tangible items. The state retains 5% and returns 1.25% back to the local point of sale.
State Motor Fuel Tax	Money that the state collects from taxes on gasoline and diesel fuel and then distributes to local governments to support transportation-related projects.
State Personal Property Replacement Tax	A state tax on certain businesses and corporations collected by the state and then distributed to local governments to replace revenue lost after the 1970 Constitution removed the authority to tax personal property.

Federal sharing of dollars provides only a small contribution and traditionally comes from grants applied for by local governments.

In addition to local tax dollars and state revenue sharing, other sources of funding can include license and permitting fees, collection of fines, fees for service and interest. In total, these sources account for close to 21% of the revenue generated.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE PRIORITY

Expenditures:

Expenditures are dollars spent by local units of government on programs and services and vary greatly depending on the government type, population served and location. Looking at expenditures by government type, municipalities accounted for almost 61% of governmental fund expenditures across the state. Counties accounted for 19%. Townships and special purpose districts made up the remaining 20%.

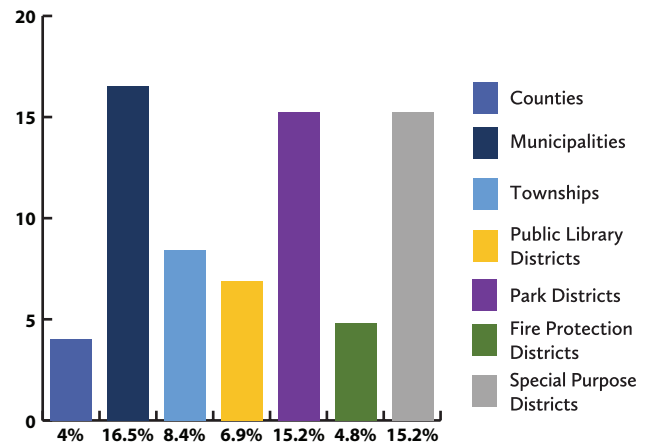
Major spending areas included public safety and justice, public assistance, general administration, pension contributions and payment on outstanding debt.

All types of government included in this report showed an increase in expenditures from the previous year. The following increases were reported:

% Of Expenditure Change by Government Type

Fiscal Year 2022 to Fiscal Year 2023

Illinois State Comptroller's 2023 Fiscal Responsibility Report Card



While the data above helps identify general revenue sources and expenditures, following the trends and financial reporting for the units of governments serving you will provide a better understanding of the services and programs your tax dollars are supporting.

As we continue into the new year, county Farm Bureaus can play a significant role in advocating for local government fiscal responsibility and promotion of the 2026 Local Government Priorities.



GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER: RURAL DEVELOPMENT AS AN IFB LOCAL GOVERNMENT PRIORITY

Rural development originally became a Local Government Priority to put into practice Illinois Farm Bureau policy, which states, “We support placing rural development as one of our highest priorities.” It remains a priority because we are now seeing how the time invested in rural development helps create an advantage for our farmers and members throughout rural Illinois.

Importantly, we want to support efforts that are designed and led at a local, grassroots level in rural areas across the state. From a state-level perspective, we want to be a catalyst to drive attention to the needs of local communities and to support initiatives that improve rural community development and quality of life issues.

Over the past three years, we have acted by:

- Investing \$250,000 into the Rural Development Grant Program from 2023–2025
- Providing support for county Farm Bureau managers to engage in rural development conferences and events
- Engaging with state and federal entities, organizations and other associations that focus on rural development and related rural issues
- Gaining insight on government and private rural development programs and initiatives in which we can be engaged and support
- Collaborating with county Farm Bureaus to provide guidance and encouragement on being involved with rural development efforts in their counties and communities

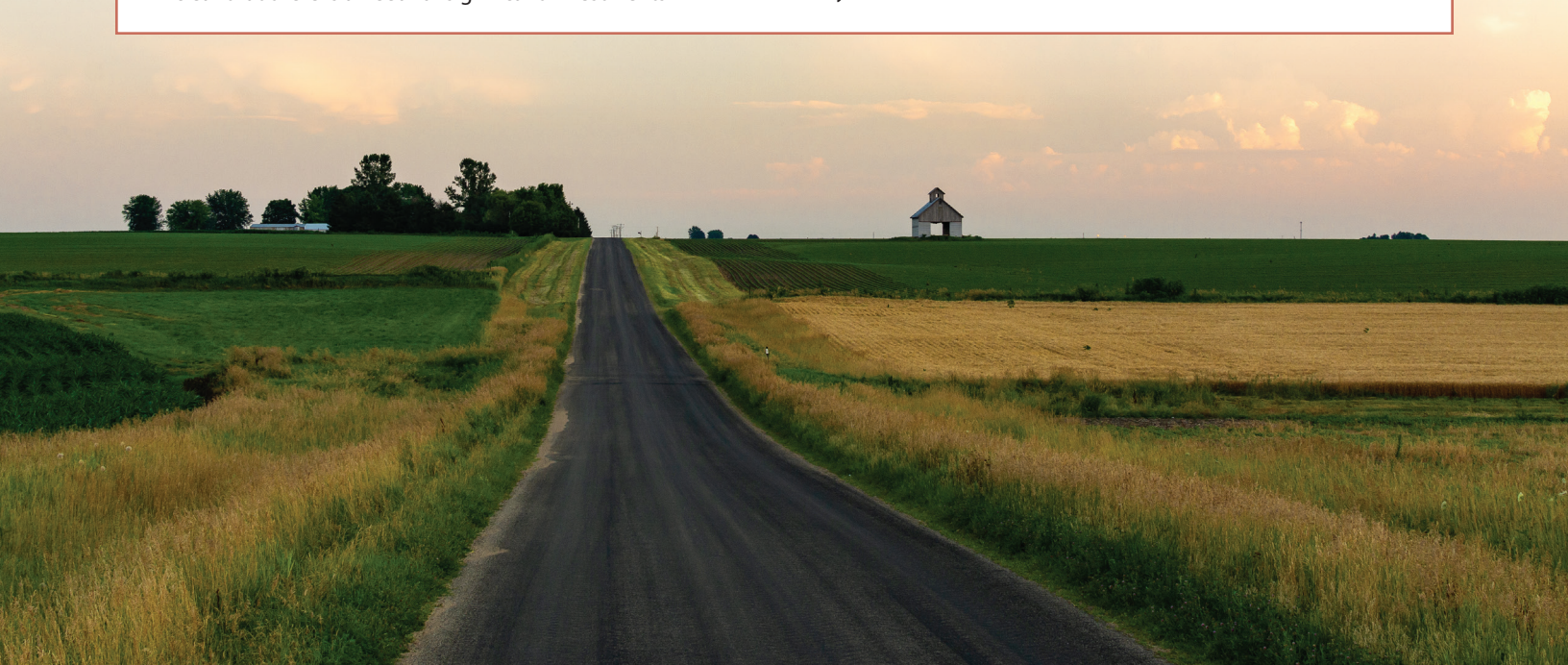
The Rural Development Grant Program remains the centerpiece of the work we are doing in the rural development space. We are currently in the process of selecting the 2025–2026 grant recipients, and it is abundantly clear that there is a need for significant investments

throughout rural Illinois. We are excited to see how the selected projects bring benefits to traditional farmer members as well as rural residents who could benefit from membership.

This year, our efforts on rural development will include:

1. Continuing to facilitate and support county Farm Bureau participation with rural development organizations and events. Examples of this could include attending the upcoming [Rural Community and Economic Development Conference](#) or getting engaged as a member of [Rural Partners Illinois](#), including attending their legislative reception and community showcase.
2. Be an ongoing partner and trusted resource for organizations focused on rural issues at the local, state and federal levels. We are actively involved with the [Governor’s Rural Affairs Council](#), [Rural Partners Illinois](#), the [Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs](#), the [Illinois Rural Health Association](#) and [USDA Rural Development in Illinois](#). We will continue to grow and deepen these relationships.
3. Providing support for rural areas through the [Rural Development Grant Program](#) including encouragement and resources for county Farm Bureaus to engage with the grant projects, recognize grant recipients and develop an ongoing relationship with these valued partners in their communities.

It is heartening to see the abundant interest and pride in the rural communities across our state, along with a strong and passionate desire to make them even better places to live. We have said it before, and we will say it again - farms and rural communities have a symbiotic relationship, and both benefit when the other is thriving. Illinois Farm Bureau, in partnership with the county Farm Bureaus and in collaboration with like-minded organizations, is committed to making a positive difference on rural issues for our members and all who call rural America home. We look forward to working together in the year ahead.



PRIORITIZE LAND-USE PLANNING AND ZONING TO PROTECT AGRICULTURE

Careful thought into creating our 2026 Local Government Priorities is not so different than a county or municipality meticulously going through the process of creating or updating a land-use plan. In both cases, the question is: Who has the tools and authority to implement these long-range goals?

When addressing the 2026 priorities, the answer is easy. Working together, we can build on existing resources at the state and local level to protect against land-use planning and zoning regulations harmful to agriculture. It's more difficult to understand how land-use planning works and under what authority a county or municipality can regulate farming.

Land-use planning and zoning are truly local issues. While state statute sets some parameters, it leaves much of the application up to counties and municipalities. Even then, the authority granted to them is very different, especially when it comes to regulating agriculture. The foundation of this priority is understanding the differences between land-use planning and zoning authority and how to engage.

Land-Use Planning:

Done correctly, a land-use plan will describe how, and at what pace, a community desires to grow. It is used to predict and guide development and locations for things like agricultural preservation, housing, businesses, recreation and transportation. County Farm Bureau involvement throughout this process helps to ensure that long-range planning prioritizes the preservation of agriculture in rural areas and around municipal development.

Zoning:

Zoning is the formal authority of a unit of local government to regulate development, divide land into designated uses and determine how land and buildings may be used. In Illinois, the decision to adopt zoning is a local choice. As a result, 59 counties and more than 700 municipalities have zoning authority.

Like land-use plans, the primary objective of zoning is to promote orderly growth and ensure that land uses are compatible with one another. However, a land-use plan cannot by itself affect change even though the plan may describe a vision for the future; the plan itself can only

recommend actions to accomplish those desires. A plan relies on the "teeth" given by zoning to bring about desired change.

As more and more local issues are driven by land-use decisions, it's important to dig deeper into that authority when regulating agriculture. Even that authority is different depending on the unit of local government. This 2026 priority begins with understanding those differences.

County and Municipal Zoning Authority:

When it comes to county zoning, state statute limits the authority to regulate agriculture. The only exception is setback restrictions on ag buildings. By law, counties can govern building location by requiring it to meet setback distances between property boundaries, roads and public rights-of-way.

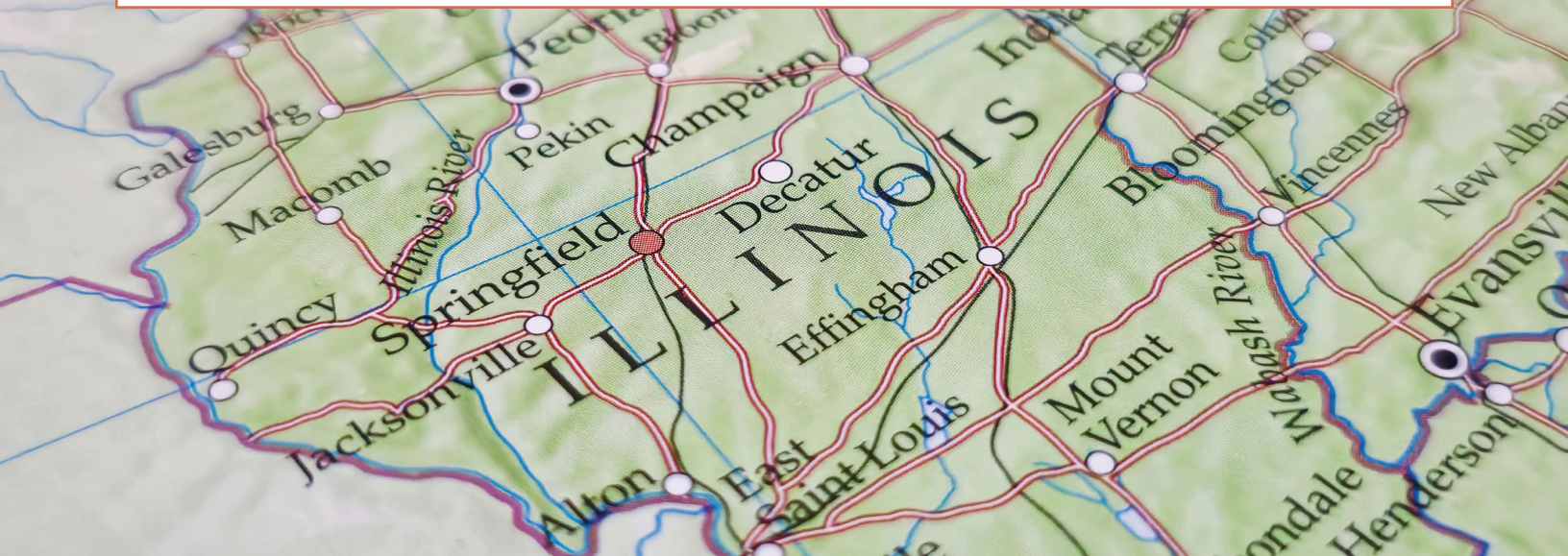
Municipal zoning statutes include no such prohibition. Therefore, unlike counties, municipalities may use zoning to control farming operations.

If a county is not zoned, a municipality may extend its zoning beyond its boundaries for up to 1.5 miles. This extension is allowed under extraterritorial jurisdiction. Through this reach, a municipality can control the use of property outside its boundaries, including farms.

This type of diversity across the state creates inconsistencies and overreach when regulating agriculture. We will continue to work with county Farm Bureaus to address those concerns by:

- Encouraging ag-friendly county and municipal ordinances and land-use plans that define and support agriculture and agritourism.
- Tracking land-use and zoning plans to develop agricultural land, including the siting of renewable energy projects and data centers.

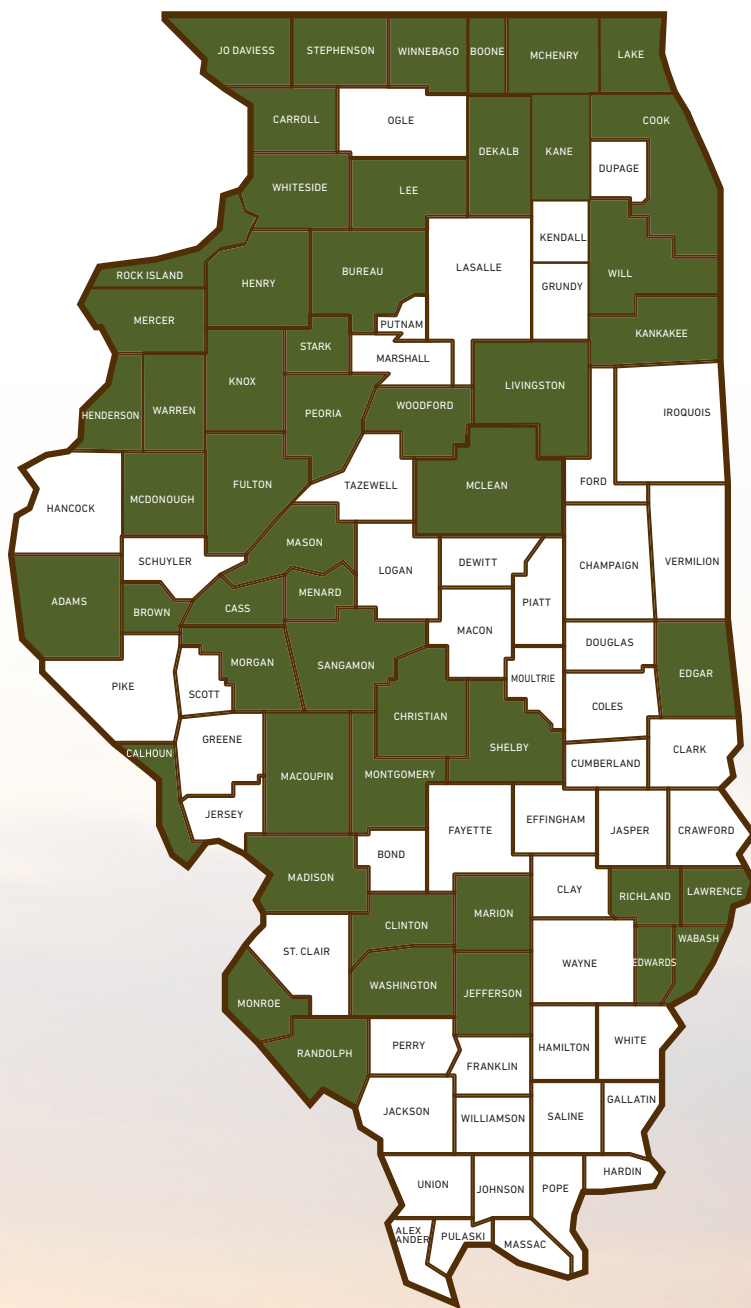
These efforts will require ongoing education of land-use regulations and authority. Our priority is to make that information available throughout the year and work with county Farm Bureaus to engage local government and protect agriculture.



Thank You, County Farm Bureaus!

To date, 52 county governments have become Allies in Agriculture by partnering with their county Farm Bureaus to adopt or re-adopt a Pro-Agriculture Resolution during the 2025 – 2026 cycle:

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Adams | 27. Madison |
| 2. Boone | 28. Marion |
| 3. Brown | 29. Mason |
| 4. Bureau | 30. McDonough |
| 5. Calhoun | 31. McHenry |
| 6. Carroll | 32. McLean |
| 7. Cass | 33. Menard |
| 8. Christian | 34. Mercer |
| 9. Clinton | 35. Monroe |
| 10. Cook | 36. Montgomery |
| 11. DeKalb | 37. Morgan |
| 12. Edgar | 38. Peoria |
| 13. Edwards | 39. Randolph |
| 14. Fulton | 40. Richland |
| 15. Henderson | 41. Rock Island |
| 16. Henry | 42. Sangamon |
| 17. Jefferson | 43. Shelby |
| 18. Jo Daviess | 44. Stark |
| 19. Kane | 45. Stephenson |
| 20. Kankakee | 46. Wabash |
| 21. Knox | 47. Warren |
| 22. Lake | 48. Washington |
| 23. Lawrence | 49. Whiteside |
| 24. Lee | 50. Will |
| 25. Livingston | 51. Winnebago |
| 26. Macoupin | 52. Woodford |



For more information on Allies in Agriculture please visit: www.ilfb.org/ifb-in-action/allies-in-agriculture