



Indiana Farm Bureau[®]

Advocating for Agriculture

2023 Legislative Successes

So much was accomplished for Indiana agriculture in this long budget session. INFB's public policy team not only helped protect Indiana farmers from harmful legislation, but also pushed through some positive issues that could improve Indiana's rural communities. Members engaged by visiting their legislators at the Statehouse, attending Third House meetings and responding to action alerts.

A total of **1,154** bills were filed at the beginning of session and only **252** bills made it through to the end. The INFB team went through each bill to make sure they were engaging in anything that may impact agriculture or rural communities.

INFB staff and members were instrumental in these significant legislative accomplishments from the 2023 Indiana General Assembly:

Budget

- An increase in public health funding, including **\$225 million** that will prioritize local public health departments. Keeps rural Indiana viable and allows county health departments to opt-in.
- Restored **Career Technical Education** as a categorical grant.
 - In Indiana, school corporations which offer state-approved courses in career and technical education receive money per student to help with the cost. CTE education includes but is not limited to agricultural education.
 - The Senate took it out of the proposed budget as a separate line item and added it to the general K-12 fund. INFB lobbied to add it back in as a separate categorical grant to ensure those funds remain in CTE programs to keep ag education alive.
- Funding for three poultry veterinary positions for the **Board of Animal Health**.
 - Veterinarian, poultry health specialist and epidemiologist.
 - These positions were needed to stay ahead of diseases like avian flu, and to plan for future retirements within the agency.
- Additional funding to enhance **Purdue Extension** staff.
 - Fought for extra money to hire and retain quality county Extension educators.
- A major increase for the **Clean Water Indiana** program at \$6 million per year.
 - Previous budget was \$970,000.
 - Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts called this a "fundraising effort of a generation."
- **Indiana Grain Buyers and Warehouse Licensing Agency's** first dedicated line item in the budget. It was formerly funded by the Indiana State Department of Agriculture.
 - \$600,000 appropriated.

Carbon sequestration pilot project

- INFB protected landowner property rights in a contested issue involving a carbon sequestration pilot program in Vigo and Vermillion counties.
- Before INFB stepped in, landowners would have been paid a minimal amount for the use of their subsurface pore space and would have had no legal recourse if they disagreed with the offered price.
- The compromises that made it into the final bill, **SB451**:
 - Landowners **will be compensated** for use of their subsurface pore space, on a per acre, per year basis for the life of the project.
 - The compensation rate would be tied to Purdue University's Farmland Values and Cash Rents Survey to **keep the price fair**.
 - An **expiration date** was added for the pilot project. After five years, if the company doesn't receive their EPA permit, the pilot project expires.
 - The landowner has a **right to negotiate** and take civil action, if necessary.

Taxes

- Some of the tax bills INFB was actively engaged in include:
 - **SB 419** – The agency bill for the Department of Revenue.
 - Provides additional tax options for INFB Health Plans, which will bring cost savings to members.
 - Clarifies that sales tax on ag equipment is exempt if predominately used for ag purposes.
 - **HB 1454** - The agency bill for the Department of Local Government Finance.
 - Will help taxpayers filing assessment appeals, adds tools to fund local EMS and creates more transparency on Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district reporting.
 - More than \$1 billion is currently going to TIF districts instead of other units of government. The added transparency is needed to understand where those dollars are being used.
 - **SB 325** - Updates the homestead standard deduction and gives more flexibility on detached buildings.
 - **HB1499** – Homeowner tax relief.
 - Homeowners with properties worth less than \$600,000 would see sizeable assessed value deductions over the next few years. Those with homes worth more than \$600,000 will see a less significant deduction.

Food security and land use

- **HB 1557** - Will inventory the loss of farmland back to 2010.
- **HB 1132** - Will create a land use taskforce to dive more deeply into growth trends in rural, urban and suburban communities, as well as how they can better position themselves to attract economic development and protect prime farmland.
- **SB 242** – Allows landowners to appeal flood map designations, request hydrologic modeling used to create the maps, and allows landowners the option of which maps to use when applying for permit.
- **HB 1639** – Allows counties who are in the same HUC 8 Watershed to create a watershed development commission for the purpose of jointly managing drainage projects and flood management within that watershed footprint. No county is obligated to join, but this will foster collaboration amongst counties to manage water based on how it actually flows.