



## **NDFB is a policy driven organization**

Where does NDFB policy come from? It comes from paid members, who generally have been involved with NDFB for years and have credibility from their peers in their home county. Policy originates at the county level and moves through the NDFB policy process. If passed at the NDFB Annual Meeting, state policy is implemented and lobbied on at the capitol.

You can learn more about NDFB policy by going to [www.ndfb.org/policy/](http://www.ndfb.org/policy/).

With the 68<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly recently behind us, here is a quick recap of NDFB victories.

## **Corporate Farming / Modern Agriculture**

The most talked about agricultural bill, and one of our successes is HB 1371 which has been referred to as the Corporate Farm bill. NDFB has supported this bill through every step of the process, as our policy supports the elimination of corporate farming laws in North Dakota.

This bill faced heavy opposition, with allegations that changing our anti-corporate farming laws would open the flood gates to huge corporate “Wall Street” interests taking over every aspect of production agriculture in North Dakota. Iowa, Indiana, and Illinois have never had laws that limit corporate farming, and yet farm ownership in those states remains overwhelmingly family oriented. HB 1371 will help dispel these myths and perceptions. This bill has gone through many changes throughout the committee process, bringing us to a final bill that was supported by all the major agriculture groups.

This will allow non-family members to form a corporation and raise livestock. There are many limitations in place including limiting agricultural corporations to livestock production, the number of acres used in an operation, and the number of partners allowed within the corporation.

This is a big step forward for North Dakota and will help farmers and ranchers who are interested in expanding animal production in our state. The bill certainly does not fulfill NDFB’s long-standing policy against the state’s corporate farming prohibition but starts to move us in the right direction.

## **Ag and Livestock Zoning**

A huge victory for NDFB was our bill to reform agriculture and livestock zoning, HB 1423. This bill addresses some of the major problems in livestock facility siting we have dealt with in recent years. Much of this bill reflects policies forwarded by the Ramsey County Farm Bureau that were passed at NDFB’s annual meeting in November. NDFB has been involved and prevailed in several lawsuits against local units of government who have stepped beyond their authority to regulate livestock siting. NDFB’s successful court cases have exposed many of the flaws in our current system that have been used to oppose and stymie the growth of modern livestock production. This bill addresses those flaws by providing clarification regarding setbacks relating to animal feeding operations and provides uniform rules. The passage of this bill will help stabilize our laws for livestock zoning.

## **Regional Livestock Planning**

Several units of government around the state are not in compliance with the state's livestock zoning code. HB 1437 provides funding in the form of grants to these government bodies to bring their local rules into conformity with the current code. Many of these nonconformity issues will go away as counties or townships adopt the revised state model ordinances put in place with the passage of HB 1423.

## **Livestock Friendly Counties**

Another great bill for the future of animal agriculture is SB 2373, which allows the ND Department of Agriculture to designate "Livestock Friendly Counties." These counties have shown they are committed to working to develop, maintain, or expand the livestock sector. The goal of these designations is to provide a framework for discussion, educate the public, provide publicity to participating counties, and instill county pride.

## **NDFB Member Health Care Coverage**

SB 2349 was a big victory for NDFB. This bill addresses consequences of the Affordable Care Act, which complicated and increased the cost of health care coverage for many families. The bill will help provide more affordable health care coverage and an additional health care plan option. We have heard the calls for relief from the burden of the cost of healthcare coverage and this bill will address that by allowing agricultural organizations to provide healthcare benefit plans to members.

NDFB took the idea for this bill to Senator Jerry Klein (R), Fessenden, who helped get the measure introduced. Similar healthcare benefit plans are utilized by Farm Bureau members in South Dakota, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Kansas, and Texas. Rates are anticipated to be on average, 30% less than similar coverage under the ACA. NDFB will work with Tennessee Farm Bureau who has offered this type of product to its members for more than 70 years. Anyone who has a membership with NDFB will be able to apply to participate in the NDFB Healthcare Benefit Plans. With the passage of this bill, NDFB will work to bring these health care plan options to our members.

## **Foreign Ownership**

There is a national movement for legislation addressing foreign ownership, and it was also a popular topic in North Dakota's legislative session. The foreign ownership issue was highlighted in our state by the Chinese owned FuFeng Group purchasing land near the Grand Forks Air Force base. Originally four bills were aimed at addressing this issue, each taking a

slightly different approach. While we didn't have any specific policy on this topic, the NDFB Legislative Task Force met to discuss the four bills. The Legislative Task force decided SB 2371 was the best bill to support.

SB 2371 prohibits ownership of real property by individuals or entities from nations identified by the federal government as foreign adversaries in the interest of national security and food security. It also has a study component that will examine the number of people that own or control real estate, commercial assets, or operate a business within this state that is owned by or subject to the jurisdiction of foreign adversaries. The study will also determine what foreign adversary list would be best for the security of our state. The study will look at the best way to implement and oversee this legislation including: best ways to work with national intelligence agents, what constitutes a national security threat, what state agencies will implement and operate a security review system and how that system will work.

HB 1135 also passed and takes a slightly different approach to this issue. This bill limits foreign governments from purchasing agricultural land in North Dakota.

### **Environmental Social Governance (ESG)**

Bills addressing environmental social governance (ESG) investing were also a popular concept this session, with several anti-ESG bills proposed. The bills are consistent with our national policy which opposes ESG being applied in business or within the government sector. Portions of HB 1345, HB 1347, and HB 1278 were incorporated into HB 1429 which passed overwhelmingly.

HB 1429 puts protections in place that limit state funds from being "socially invested." Social investments consider the environmental, social and governance impact when investing. This bill also calls for a study that will analyze ESG trends, laws, and policies that impact state industries and give us an idea if additional legislation is needed to combat ESG investing.



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