MARYLAND FARM BUREAU’S 2016 LEGISLATIVE PREVIEW

By: Matt Teffeau
September 24, 2015
Your MFB Government Relations Team

• One of the biggest advantages of being a Maryland Farm Bureau member is the representation from our Government Relations Team. Your job is to farm and produce the best product you can. You don’t have the time or energy at the end of your long day to review the hundreds of government proposals that are pending and determine exactly how they might impact your farm.

• MFB’s Government Relations Team works tirelessly to make sure government officials at all levels understand the impact that new laws and regulations can have on your farming operation. Without solid and constant representation during the Maryland Legislative Session, many bills that would negatively affect agriculture would slip by without being noticed.
2015 MGA- Detrimental Bills

**Opposed HB 928** – *The Repeal of Sales and Use Tax Exemption for Agricultural Products and Equipment*. **Defeated in Committee**

(This bill’s $212 million sales tax increase would most definitely move the vast majority of Maryland’s $3.57 Billion in gross sales of Ag products and services to neighboring states.)

**Opposed SB 463 (HB 706)** – Ban on the Use of Antimicrobial Drugs in Cattle, Swine, and Poultry Feed. **Defeated in Committee**

**Opposed SB 470(HB1075)** – Ban on the Use of Antibiotic Drugs in Feed for Food-Producing Animals. **Defeated in Committee**

**Opposed SB 533 (HB 886)** – *Bay Tax Equity Act* (AKA Chicken Tax). **Defeated in Committee**
Detrimental Bills- Continued

**Opposed SB 257 (HB 381)** – Governor O’Malley’s Phosphorus Management Tool Mandated in law. **Defeated in Committee**; prevented from being mandated in law and kept in Maryland Department of Ag Regulation.

**Opposed SB 532 (HB 1019)** - **Farmers' Rights Act** (Infringement on the Volunteer contracts between the Poultry Integrators and the Producers). **Defeated in Committee**

Opposed making Nutrient Management Plans available to the public through **SB 695 (HB 755)** - **Public Information Act - Enforcement, Fees, and Exemptions**. The bill was amended to remove Nutrient Management Plans from the list of public documents.

**Opposed SB 163 (HB 605)** – Require Labeling of Plants that were treated with Neonicotinoid Pesticides and remove these Pesticides from being purchased without a restricted pesticide license. **Defeated in Committee**
2015 MGA- Supportive Bills

• SB0117 - Caroline County and Dorchester County - Sunday Hunting - Failed in Committee

• SB 378 - Baltimore County - Sunday Hunting - Failed in Committee

• SB 122 (HB 540) – Expansion of the Farmstead Cheese Program. Passed both chambers and will be signed into Law.

• SB 455 (HB 389) - Education - Beginning of School Year - After Labor Day - Failed in Committee

• SB 305 - Crimes - Theft of Scrap Metal - Failed in Committee, but Budget Language was added to mandated the Maryland State Police to study and report back on the current status of theft of scrap metal in the state.

• SB 122 (HB 540) – Expansion of the Farmstead Cheese Program. Passed both chambers and will be signed into Law.
Supportive Bills- Continued

- **HB 286- Calvert and St. Mary's Counties - Scenic Byways – Signs** - Passed both chambers and will be signed into Law.

- **HB 803- Agriculture - Industrial Hemp – Legalization** - Passed both chambers and will be signed into Law.

- **HB 812- Vehicle Laws - All-Terrain Vehicles - Access to Farms** - Passed both chambers and will be signed into Law.

- **SB 370- Unmanned Aircraft Systems Research, Development, Regulation, and Privacy Act of 2015** - Passed both chambers and will be signed into Law.

- **SB 844 - Frederick County - Deer Management Permit - Use of Rifles** - Passed both chambers and will be signed into Law.

- **SB 154- Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Thermal Energy** – Failed in Committee

- **SJ 01- Susquehanna River Basin - Sediment and Nutrient Pollution (National Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act of 2015)** – Failed in Committee
Medical Marijuana Coming to Maryland

• **Senate Bill 923 and House Bill 881**
  Senate Bill 923 and House Bill 881, signed into law by Governor O’Malley on April 14, 2014, will significantly change the medical marijuana program being implemented by the Natalie M. LaPrade Medical Marijuana Commission. The Commission is in the process of promulgating regulations to implement these changes. All information regarding the program will be placed on this website as it becomes available.

  [Senate Bill 923 and House Bill 881](#)

Proposed Regulations issued January 23, 2105 (Volume 42 - Issue 2 - Pages 214-244)
Proposed regulations were published in the Maryland Register on Friday, January 23, 2105
[View Proposed Regulations in Maryland Register](#)
**Growers**

- The grower application review regulation reorganizes and clarifies the nature of the application review.

- A new regulation requires the licensed growers to periodically report “on the minority owners and employees of the grower,” as required by the statute.

- In the Medical Cannabis Growing Controls chapter, the Commission has revised the section governing the application of pesticides to be consistent with other State laws and regulations.
The General Assembly has rewritten the provisions regarding licensed grower distribution and the language regarding “satellite facility.” The new draft revises this in a chapter called ‘Licensed Grower Dispensary Facility” to make clear that a grower may operate a single facility to dispense medical Cannabis, and that it need not have any restriction on where it is located, and that the grower must obtain a separate license to operate that facility as a dispensary.

There will be 15 licensed growers allowed in Maryland through 2018, according to Byron, who each will pay a $6,000 application fee and $125,000 annual licensing fee for that privilege, according to the current draft regulations available on the Medical Marijuana Commission website. There will also be two dispensaries allowed in each senatorial district, with a $5,000 application fee for those hopeful managers and an annual $40,000 licensing fee.
MFB Policy toward Medical Marijuana

- Currently, no policy toward the production and sale of medical marijuana, however.

- MFB opposes the production and sale of recreational marijuana.

- What education or policy needs to be discuss/debated to show possible value-added agriculture and enhanced production methods.
This Week in Annapolis....

Today the House Environment and Transportation Committee was briefed on the State of Agriculture in Maryland. MFB President Chuck Fry kicked-off the discussion by giving a general description of our state’s farm operations. He talked about Maryland’s 12,400 family farms and how they cultivate over 2 million acres of land, which is 1/3 of all the land in Maryland. He talked about the diversification of ag - as it ranges from commodity grain to poultry, livestock & horses and from organic to farm wineries, breweries & agritourism. He also shared with the committee that farmers are not just good stewards of the land, but are also generous with their product. In 2014, Maryland farmers donated 4.6 million pounds of produce to the Maryland Food Bank.

President Fry finished his segment of the briefing by explaining MFB’s grassroots organization and our top 3 priorities. The top 3 priorities as
Immediate Action Request!
February 23, 2015

Maryland Farm Bureau members, agricultural seed and equipment suppliers and others who seek to preserve our rural economy are urged to contact the Maryland General Assembly in opposition to HB 928, legislation that could put farms on the brink of disaster.

HB 928, entitled Sales & Use Tax – Agricultural Products and Equipment – Repeal of Exemption, was introduced by Delegate Jay Walker of Prince George’s County. The bill would repeal the tax exemption that exists in current law for the purchase of inputs for farm operations. If passed, this bill would require farmers to pay sales tax on the purchase of:

- livestock,
- feed or bedding for livestock,
- seed, fertilizer, fungicide, herbicide, insecticide,
- bale twine or wire,
- fuel for farm equipment and tractors,
- containers to transport products to market,
- farm vehicles,
- milking equipment, and
- all other farm equipment used to raise livestock, prepare, irrigate or tend the soil, or plant, service, harvest, store, clean, dry or transport seeds or crops.
- The bill also applies the sales tax to services performed on the farm such
Immediate Action Request!

March 2, 2015

Action Alert for the Bay Tax Equity (AKA Chicken Tax) Bills

Maryland Farm Bureau members and poultry growers are urged to contact the Maryland General Assembly in opposition to HB 886 & SB 533. This legislation that creates a 5 cent tax on every chicken grown in Maryland. Although the bill requires the poultry companies to not pass the cost onto the growers, there is very little to verify that from happening.

These two bills have the potential to drive the 700 farm families growing chickens in Maryland out of business and harm the corn and soybean farmers who supply feed ingredients to Maryland-grown chickens. This legislation will also harm other businesses in the rural parts of the state, and destroy the highly effective farm cover crop program touted as a major contributor to Chesapeake Bay water quality improvement.

Stop the Chicken Tax!
• This day of briefings and lobbying will give you the opportunity to weigh-in on important issues that may impact your farm for years to come. The Day-In-Annapolis is timed to bring you to the State House at a very critical time during the 90-day session – a time when Committees are beginning to make decisions on pending bills.
The day began with a legislative briefing by the MFB Government Relations staff, followed by a chance to sit in on the legislative session. A hot luncheon at the Calvert House brought together farmers and legislators from across the state as all legislators were invited to attend. With so many new legislatures in the General Assembly, we need now, more than ever, to educate our representatives on the value of agriculture to this state. This was a great opportunity to talk to the Senators and Delegates from your area and to help folks from the city districts better understand your farming business.

(Photo: President of the Senate, Mike Miller, speaking with Frederick County farmers.)
In addition to representing you in Annapolis, MFB’s Government Relations Team works with American Farm Bureau Federation team to leverage your dues and represent your interests in Washington D.C. AFBF has been recognized as one of the most effective lobbying groups in D.C.
GRB #14 December 18, 2014

"To promote and protect Maryland agriculture and rural life"

Attention: The GRB is formatted for Outlook users, if you are having trouble viewing the GRB in Gmail or other domains, please click here.

WHAT'S IN THIS EDITION

- Take Action and Send in Comments Opposing the PMT
- Tax Extender and Omnibus Bills Pass Congress
- Rep. Harris and Sen. Cardin work on Amendment to Protect Farmers and Landowners
- Maryland Farm Bureau Held 99th Annual Meeting
- 2014 Ag Outlook & Policy Conference
- MFB on Twitter
- 2015 Farm Trucking Forums
- Maryland Agriculture in the News
- Dates to Remember

Take Action and Send in Comments Opposing the PMT
What Do You Get For Your Farm Bureau Membership Dues

- Maryland Farm Bureau is a grassroots organization that includes all types of agriculture from traditional to non-traditional Ag practices. Being properly represented by an organization that allows the farmer to determine the organization’s policy and direction, ensures that Maryland farmers have a seat at the table when it comes to State and National politics. MFB’s Government Relations Team not only represents the nearly 37,000 Farm Bureau members, but also assists in getting individual members together with their legislators. Those face-to-face meetings many times determine the way legislators vote on bills.

- Being properly represented in Annapolis and Washington DC (which we hope you feel are well worth your dues) are just a few of the benefits provided by Maryland Farm Bureau. Some other benefits are discounts on Nationwide Insurance, GM vehicles, selected farm supplies and equipment, hotel stays, car rentals and energy purchases as well as representing your interests on many boards, commissions and committees.
What Do You Get For Your Farm Bureau Membership Dues

• Maryland Farm Bureau works year around to promote your agenda and help improve your bottom line. We know how hard you labor to produce the nation’s food, fuel and fiber. We thank you for that and we thank you for helping to make Farm Bureau one of the strongest grassroots organizations in the nation!

• For more information about Maryland Farm Bureau, visit us at www.mdfarmbureau.com or call 410-922-3426.