



**ILLINOIS FARM BUREAU RESPONDS TO
AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION'S VOTE TO TERMINATE IFB'S MEMBERSHIP**

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Farm Bureau President Brian Duncan today issued a memo on the American Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors' vote to terminate IFB's membership in the federation.

Last night AFBF issued a communication stating that the AFBF Board of Directors voted to terminate IFB's membership in AFBF, effective December 20, 2024.

We believe AFBF is choosing to abandon our more than 70,000 Illinois farmer members because our affiliate insurance company does not want to force non-farmers to join.

We believe AFBF is choosing to put our farms, our families, and our communities at risk at a time when we need support through federal policy. In short, we believe AFBF has chosen to break its promises to Illinois farmers.

We have no desire to leave AFBF and we will fight to stay. We made good faith efforts to mediate on Monday and AFBF walked away from the table. I want to reassure you we are committed to defending the rights of IFB, our county Farm Bureaus, and our farmer members throughout the state. Today we filed a lawsuit in McLean County circuit court to hold AFBF accountable and protect our members.

I want to take this opportunity to share some fundamental truths about this situation, as we see them.

First, AFBF's actions do not align with its words.

AFBF touts its representation of American farmers and ranchers. Yet, it sources much of its stature and perceived power from people who are not farmers, but insurance customers. When

membership for these individuals in Illinois becomes voluntary, AFBF's response is to abandon the very people it claims to represent: farmers.

AFBF has fundamentally changed what it means to be part of the "Farm Bureau family," claiming that we, Illinois farmers, can only be part of the family if we allow AFBF to exert control over state Farm Bureaus and their affiliates and fall in line. AFBF's demands on Illinois Farm Bureau and COUNTRY Financial are wrong, and those demands break their promises.

Second, Illinois Farm Bureau remains steadfast in its commitment to serving our members, defending our county Farm Bureaus, and protecting our use of the Farm Bureau trademark in Illinois. We have been there for our county Farm Bureaus and members for more than 100 years and are as committed to you as ever.

That's being demonstrated by the IFB Board who approved a significant financial mitigation grant program to secure county Farm Bureau financing amidst these changes. Our organization had similar discussions with AFBF on behalf of IFB and COUNTRY about ways we could strategically partner and support them with additional financial resources, but those offers were repeatedly rebuffed.

Third, with this decision to terminate IFB's membership, AFBF is breaking its own agreements with our organization. Those rules were set by a 1990 agreement between AFBF and IFB, one that clearly states AFBF "... will not seek to limit or terminate IAA's membership rights in AFBF by reason of the business activities of IAA's affiliates."

AFBF is clearly ignoring this agreement by claiming that IFB must be held accountable for the actions of COUNTRY Financial, one of IFB's affiliates.

This tactic should serve as a stark warning to other state Farm Bureaus - a warning that AFBF's priority is associated with memberships gained through agreements with insurance customers and the dollars that come with those, rather than focusing on a state's farmer members.

Fourth, the decision by COUNTRY Financial to eliminate the underwriting requirement for IFB membership was made after great reflection and for sound business reasons. As I have shared before, the decision to change the underwriting requirement to allow clients with non-farm insurance products to choose if they join IFB was based on feedback from COUNTRY clients and sales representatives as well as competitive pressures COUNTRY faces in the marketplace. The COUNTRY Financial Board vetted this decision for months and supports it. This decision is not only the right one for its policyholders, but it's good for Illinois Farm Bureau and county Farm Bureaus because as COUNTRY Financial succeeds, so do we – and vice versa.

This decision also substantiates sound governance on behalf of the COUNTRY Financial Board of Directors and COUNTRY management. You'll note that none of the communications from President Duvall suggest that forcing an insurance affiliate to require membership of non-farmers is good governance, they simply state it is the AFBF way. What other states and other

insurance affiliates may consider sound governance does not dictate the governance practices for Illinois.

As a proud fourth generation Illinois farmer and as your president/elected leader, I refuse to accept these decisions, and I will not allow our membership nor our organization to be fractured by AFBF. I vow to fight alongside IFB Vice President Evan Hultine and our 18 IFB Directors to defend and protect our members, our county Farm Bureaus, and our organization. Future generations of Farm Bureau members will look back at this moment, our defining moment, and point to the steps we took to shape their future.

Let us not let them down.

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Photo:



IFB President Brian Duncan