



AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION®

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Issue:

Rural communities play an important role in our nation's economy. They are home to a majority of U.S. manufacturing and our agricultural production. American agriculture provides the food and fiber for our country and the world, creating jobs for millions of Americans. Our farmers and ranchers are the most efficient producers in the world, but their ability to meet domestic demands as well as compete globally depends on robust and reliable infrastructure needs including: roads, inland waterways, ports, railways, and broadband connectivity. Deteriorating rural infrastructure, however, threatens the competitive leadership of American agriculture.

Background:

AFBF is a founding member of the Rebuild Rural Coalition. Rebuild Rural is comprised of more than 220 organizations from across the country that collectively represent U.S. agricultural producers, cooperatives, rural businesses, rural communities and rural families. The Rebuild Rural Coalition is dedicated to advocating for investment in rural America's infrastructure and understands that rural America's infrastructure needs are fundamentally vast.

Past infrastructure initiatives often focused on urban and suburban areas while not adequately addressing the unique needs of rural communities. Rural communities have seen their infrastructure deteriorate, jeopardizing jobs, health and wellbeing, and overall competitiveness in agriculture and other industries important to rural America.

American agriculture truly feeds the world and creates millions of jobs for U.S. workers. Our nation's ability to produce food and fiber and transport it efficiently across the globe is a critical factor in U.S. competitiveness internationally. Our deteriorating infrastructure threatens this leadership position and negatively impacts the ability of rural Americans to do their jobs.

Transportation infrastructure improvement to highways, bridges, railways, locks and dams, harbors and port facilities is the most obvious need in rural communities, but not the only need that must be addressed. In addition, critical needs exist in providing clean water and affordable housing options for rural families, expanding broadband access across rural communities, updating ag research facilities, and enhancing the ability to supply affordable, reliable and secure power for the rural economy.

Federal investment plays a vital role in repairing and expanding our nation's infrastructure; however, federal funds cannot fully meet the vast diversity of needs. This is why public-private partnerships and other creative solutions are necessary to meet the challenges of rural America. For infrastructure funding to be utilized to the highest degree, we must ease burdensome regulations and outdated statutory requirements, as well as fund projects in a way that ensures completion in a timely manner.

Legislative Status:

It is expected that infrastructure might be one area of bipartisanship in the 116th Congress. AFBF's Board of Directors have set infrastructure as one of our Strategic Action Plan Goals to work for greater investment in rural and agricultural infrastructure, including broadband Internet access, rural roads and bridges, inland waterway locks and dams, sea ports and agricultural research.

AFBF Policy:

Farm Bureau supports the development of a long-range national transportation policy that views transportation as a holistic system servicing the needs of both passengers and freight across all modes and recognizes the importance of connectivity between modes. Our nation's transportation policy should encourage exploration of public/private partnerships and be designed to support global competitiveness while developing the most economical and energy efficient methods of meeting future transportation needs.

We support more allocation of funds for the maintenance and improvement of our transportation infrastructure, including:

- The lock and dam system and waterways;
- Rural highways;
- Railroad systems;
- Farm-to-market roads;
- Pipelines; and
- General aviation airports.

Farm Bureau supports increasing broadband access in rural areas through a combination of tax incentives, grants and/or regulation. Farm Bureau supports using the Universal Service Fund to provide affordable communication services for rural areas and to ensure rural telecommunication technology is equitable to the infrastructure in urban and suburban areas. Farm Bureau supports increased funding for and improvements for USDA's Community Connect, Distance Learning and Telemedicine and e-Connectivity programs.

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