# Making the Agritourism Voice Heard

#### **2019 Virginia Agritourism Conference**

#### April 4, 2019



#### Who is the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation?



The vision of Virginia Farm Bureau is to create an environment where agriculture can prosper in order to improve the lives of Virginians.

**Mission:** We will enhance, primarily through advocacy, education and communication, the agricultural interests of Farm Bureau members through economic, political and social programs.

#### Who is the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation?

- 88 County Farm Bureaus across the Commonwealth
- 129,000 total membership
- 34,000 Farm Producer Members Make the Policy









12580 West Creek Pkwy Richmond, VA 23238 (Goochland County)





#### \* \* Virginia Farm Bureau Federation \* \* GRASSROOTS POLICY PROCESS









#### Virginia Farm Bureau Federation

#### 2019 POLICIES

Resolutions adopted by Voting Delegates at the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation

January 2019



### **Governmental Relations Team**



Martha Moore Vice President



Stefanie Kitchen Assistant Director



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Ben Rowe National Affairs Coordinator Legislative Specialist



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- Elected officials can no way know everything about every subject before them.
- Lobbyist help provide information on their industry or for who they represent.
- Elected officials learn to know who they can trust and who misrepresents issues and "facts".



Building Relationships

Telling Your Story

Lobbying & Testifying

### **Building Relationships**

- Long term process start early
- Understand them and their district
- Understand how agriculture fits in the big picture
- Communicate with letters, emails, phone calls, face to face visits, town halls
- Be willing to engage in a dialogue

#### http://virginiageneralassembly.gov



# Virginia LIS

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LIS	
VIRGINIA'S LEGISLATIVE INFORMA	TION SYSTEM
SEARCH SITE	2019 SESSION
enter keyword here GO	Convenes January 9, 2019
QUICK LINKS •	Bills & Resolutions: Status of individual bills and related information
	General Assembly Members: Member sponsored legislation
OTHER SESSIONS •	Standing Committees: Legislation referred to committee
	State Budget: Budget bills, committees and summaries
LOBBYIST in a BOX	Meetings: House and Senate committee meeting schedule
	Statistics: Session statistics
	Lobbyist-in-a-Box: Subscription-based bill tracking service
VIRGINIA LAW PORTAL	Cumulative Index: Subject index of bills and resolutions
Code of Virginia	2018 Special Session I: Convened April 11, 2018 2018 Special Session II: Convened August 30, 2018
Virginia Administrative Code	
Constitution of Virginia	
Charters	
Authorities	
Compacts	
Uncodified Acts	
RIS Users (account required)	
SEARCHABLE DATABASES	
Bills & Resolutions session legislation	
Bill Summaries session summaries	
Reports to the General Assembly House and Senate documents	
and the second second	

# **Telling Your Story**

Personal communications are powerful

Don't be afraid to use emotion

• Be who you are

Weave your story throughout the message

# Lobbying

- Personal visits highly effective
- Testifying
- Emails
- Grassroots lobbying
- Involving influential

# When you make a visit

- Know what you want
- Know your subject
- Be brief Try to make your point in 3 minutes or less
- Never make statements you cant backup
- Be truthful
- If you say will get back to them DO IT!!
- Never talk down the other side
- Always thank them

# When you testify

- Know what you want
- Know your subject
- Be truthful
- Be brief
- Never make statements you can't backup
- Never talk down the other side

#### **Coalitions/Partners**

 a group of people, groups, or countries who have joined together for a common purpose

 the action or process of joining together with another or others for a common purpose



### What if we disagree?

 Coalition members don't always agree on all issues

Find common ground

Clearly communicate your position

### Links

**VA General Assembly** http://virginiageneralassembly.gov/ Virginia LIS https://leg1.state.va.us/ **U.S. House or Representatives** www.house.gov/ **U.S. Senate** www.senate.gov/ **Virginia Farm Bureau Federation** www.vafb.com American Farm Bureau www.fb.org

#### Resources

# CHRISTOPHER KUSH THE ONE-HOUR ACTIVIST

THE 15 MOST POWERFUL ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO FIGHT FOR THE ISSUES AND CANDIDATES YOU CARE ABOUT

#### TIPS ON LOBBYING

BE PRACTICAL. Recognize that each legislator has commitments. Don't chastise a legislator who normally supports you if he or she happens to vote against one of your bills. This doesn't necessarily mean he/she has deserted your whole program. Give legislators the benefit of the doubt; they will appreciate it and remember that you did.

**BE A GOOD OPPONENT.** Fight issues, not persons. And be ready with alternatives or solutions as well as with criticisms. This is constructive opposition.

**BE INFORMED**. Never meet with legislators to advocate a position without first studying the facts and the arguments pro and con.

**NEVER BREAK A PROMISE**. This is a cardinal rule of politics. If you tell a legislator you'll do something, then do it. No excuses.

DON'T CHANGE HORSES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREAM. Never leave legislators stranded out on a limb by changing your policy or position after they have publicly stated a position that you have urged them to take.

LEARN TO EVALUATE AND WEIGH ISSUES. Many bills which are tossed into the hopper "by request" are never intended to become law. So, don't criticize legislators for the bills which are introduced, and don't call out the "Army" until you are sure a bill is serious. DON'T UNDERESTIMATE LEGISLATORS. With very rare exceptions, they are honest, intelligent, and want to do the right thing. Your job is to inform them what you think is right.

**BE UNDERSTANDING**. Put yourself in the legislator's place. Try to understand their problems, their outlooks, their goals. Then you are more likely to persuade them to do the same in understanding yours.

BE FRIENDLY. Don't contact legislators only when you want their help. Invite them to attend your county annual meeting to say "Thank you!" Take pains to keep in touch with them throughout the year — every year.

**BE REASONABLE**. Recognize that legitimate differences of opinion exist. Never indulge in threats. Remember, friends come and go, but enemies accumulate.

BE THOUGHTFUL. Commend the right things legislators do. That's the way you like to be treated. Lawmakers will tell you that they get dozens of letters asking them to do something, but very few thanking them for what they have done.

BE REALISTIC. Remember that controversial legislation or regulations usually result in compromise. It has always been so and it will always be so in a democracy. BE SURE OF WHAT YOU ASK FOR...

YOU MIGHT JUST GET IT!

#### MAJOR MISTAKES TO AVOID

 Don't assume each legislator is a walking encyclopedia on every pending issue. During the 2014 General Assemby 2,888 different bills and resolutions were introduced.
1,647 passed by both chambers. That's a lot of legislation to read and remember. It's virtually impossible for every legislator to know every bill, chapter, and verse.

 Don't expect a commitment on the spot. Most legislators are thoughtful, deliberate types, who make a point to seek out all sides of a particular issue before taking a position. Remember that a good politician generally checks out the water's depth before diving in.

3. Don't lobby without the facts. Smoke and mirrors won't do the job in winning a legislator over. You must demonstrate through tangible evidence supported by facts that a particular action is both desirable and justifiable.

4. Don't forget there's always another side to the issue. Each state representative has an average of 70,78' constituents; each state senator has an average of 70,69c. You can be sure that there's at least one constituent, if not more, who has a different position on an issue and, just like you, expects to have his or her voice head. 5. Don't run down the opposition. Name calling or derogatory remarks don't win friends and influence legislation.

6. Don't burn your bridges when you don't win. Working with the legislators is an investment that may not pay off immediately. Don't burn your bridges if results aren't immediately forthcoming.

 Don't fail to say thank you. Even though meeting with constituents comes with the territory for legislators, it's still an act that should be acknowledged. A thank-you is always in order and appreciated.

 Don't leave never to be heard from again. One phone call or visit isn't enough. Stay on top of developments relating to your issue so that when new and relevant information becomes available, you can pass it along.



Helping you is what we do best.



# Thank you!

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