

Policy Advisory Group Report

Members

- Steve Austin
- David Hoar
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Ag Labor/Immigration Policy Advisory Group

The Ag Labor Policy Advisory Group met on June 18 via conference call to discuss several labor related issues and to receive the latest updates regarding immigration reform efforts at the national level. The PAG also reviewed and discussed several labor related policy submissions by various counties across the state for the 2015 policy development process.

One of those recommendations was submitted by Gibson County, regarding Immigration issues in the INFB policy book, §707. The PAG expressed support for the Gibson County recommendation, which seeks to address a legal process for guest workers to obtain a driver's license in order to avoid unnecessary risk.

Gibson County recommendation: *Gibson County recognizes the vital importance of a stable, legal and skilled workforce for our Indiana farms. We urge all elected officials to diligently seek common ground so our valuable employees may more fully contribute and benefit in the opportunities our State has to offer. We urge our elected officials to seek a legal process whereby these workers can safely transit to and from their places of employment without fearing the violation of our state laws. These legal workers should be allowed to hold temporary drivers licenses so long as they can obtain a temporary driver's license and provide proof of insurance at all times.*

Reasoning: *Gibson County farms rely upon migrant workers for several of our farms.*

The recommended language was ultimately moved from §707.00 to §706.00, which covers agricultural labor issues.

Additionally, the PAG expressed the need for INFB to conduct an educational campaign on the issue of guest workers and the importance of the agriculture sector. The committee suggested a public relations or education campaign that highlights local stories related to the needs and challenges of guest workers on the farm and in rural communities. The PAG wrote and submitted an internal INFB policy on this topic to be submitted to the INFB board of directors.

Internal recommendation: *We support the development and implementation of a public relations campaign by Indiana Farm Bureau on immigration reform and labor with the goal of educating other Farm Bureau members and the general public on the needs and realities of farmers with regard to guest workers.*

The PAG received a legislative update on immigration reform efforts in Washington, D.C., from AFBF labor expert Kristi Boswell. While several immigration reform related bills have been introduced in a piecemeal fashion in the U.S. House of Representatives, little is occurring in committee at the present time. Presidential politics is also expected to further complicate the issue and make it difficult for Congress to pass any meaningful immigration reform legislation.

Boswell also encouraged the PAG to consider advocating for immigration reform during the congressional August Recess. She noted that there are a lot of great resources and information available on the AFBF website. Also, she encouraged the committee to share their testimonials or stories about how labor issues impact their farms and submit these via the AFBF website. These local stories go a long way in helping advocate for immigration and labor reform for the agricultural sector. Also, if farmers are on Twitter or other social media, AFBF has been using the hash tag #ifarmimmigration.

Questions regarding the activities of the Ag Labor/Immigration PAG can be directed to one of the group members or to [Kyle Cline](#), 317-692-7845, the Farm Bureau staff member facilitating the group.