



# Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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*For Immediate Release*

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## **Farmers converge in Annapolis**

Over 100 Maryland Farm Bureau members gathered in the state capital on Tuesday, February 15, for the organization's annual Day in Annapolis. Sponsored by the Young Farmers' and Women's Leadership committees, the event included legislative briefings and lobbying opportunities at a critical time in the 90-day General Session.

"While we have a presence in Annapolis every day, it is vitally important that our legislators hear from our farmer members," said Patricia Langenfelder, MFB President. "This event gives them a chance to explain how particular bills can and will affect the very important business of producing food and fiber in Maryland."

The day began with briefings on pending bills important to the agricultural community. MFB Government Relations Director Valerie Connelly discussed support for Senate Bill 254 that would establish the Maryland Livestock and Poultry Care Advisory Board. She also explained the controversial Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2011 that mandates no new major subdivisions with traditional on-site sewage disposal systems. "We have not taken a position on the act yet, however, we are very concerned that this would seriously affect farmers' private property rights," Connelly explained.

With a number of bills filed for Maryland estate tax reform, the director said MFB recommends that the estate tax exemption be increased to \$5 million and supports the elimination of the Maryland estate tax on farmland and on property encumbered by conservation easements.

MFB Government Relations Assistant Director Kurt Fuchs discussed the organization's opposition to Senate Bill 304 which would cause the electricity consumption by a residential retail electric customer that exceeds 1,000 kWh in a month to be subject to a "renewable energy surcharge." This surcharge could reach almost \$400 per month for many livestock and poultry farmers that run cooling systems almost continuously in the summer months for the comfort and well-being of their animals.

Fuchs also discussed MFB's support for Senate Bill 422 and House Bill 411 that could lead to the safe extraction of natural gas from the Marcellus Shale formation in Western Maryland.

After the briefings, members gathered in the lobby of the State House to greet legislators as they arrived for session. Many members also made office visits to their local representatives and concluded the day with lunch with many of the delegates and senators at the Governor Calvert House.

Maryland Farm Bureau is a private, non-profit membership organization. It is controlled by its members through the democratic process and is financed by voluntary membership dues. Its strength comes from the active participation of over 34,000 member families that belong to the state's 23 county Farm Bureaus.

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Photos Available Upon Request.