



P.O. Box 27766
Raleigh, North Carolina 27611
919.782.1705
NCFB.org

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the **LEADER**

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Farm Bureau always shines in times of need. Our organization has had a great year, and we can be proud of that. But at the same time, we feel the real pain and loss that many of our Farm Bureau family members are enduring at this moment. A Greek philosopher, Epictetus once said, "It is not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters." We can be thankful we are a part of an organization comes come together to comfort one another, and then straps on our work boots to do whatever it takes to get the job done and move agriculture forward.

We all look forward to 2019 with hope for a better and blessed year for Farm Bureau and our farm families.

A LOOK BACK AT **2018**



We are helping to educate future agriculture and Farm Bureau leaders as a result of our R. Flake Shaw scholarship program. Our scholarship is highly sought after and selection is competitive. We are recommending this year to expand the number of scholarships given to students pursuing agriculture majors.

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

Our core mission remains legislative representation for agriculture and rural communities, and I am proud to report that our organization's reputation and influence, both in Raleigh and in D.C., is at its absolute strongest.

In the short session of the N.C. General Assembly, we were instrumental in the passage of the North Carolina Farm Act of 2018. In response to the ongoing nuisance lawsuits it was imperative that this legislation passed which included, among other provisions, strengthened language to our Right-to-Farm statute.

Another piece of legislation that was important to Farm Bureau was a bill to allow member organizations – like us – to offer health plan options as a member benefit to all members. The work on this legislation is ongoing. We are working to give you – our members – better, more affordable health plan options.

At the federal level, 12 of our 15 Members of Congress earned the Friend of Farm Bureau award in 2018 by supporting Farm Bureau policies and legislation at least 70% of the time. We are fortunate to have representatives who understand the needs and challenges facing agriculture, but we must continue to carry our message to them on important issues like the

Charles Dickens opened his book *A Tale of Two Cities* with the famous line, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” I think this quote accurately describes 2018.

Organizationally, we have had the best of times:

MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

In January we will report 568,255 members at the American Farm Bureau Annual Convention. That is an increase of 30,000 members over two years! North Carolina is a growing state, but we could not achieve this exceptional membership growth without the hard work and dedication to service demonstrated by our county Farm Bureaus and agency force.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The growth and vitality of our organization is directly proportionate to the effort we put into our leadership development programs. I am continually impressed by the character of our future leaders and the valuable work of our Young Farmers and Ranchers, Women's Committee, LEAD graduates, and other volunteer leaders.

Farm Bill, immigration, trade, and the Adverse Effect Wage Rate.

Please see our 2018 Public Policy Highlights brochure for an in-depth review of the issues our staff has worked on this year.

For Farm Bureau it may have been the best of times, but for North Carolina agriculture, 2018 has been the worst of times:

FARM INCOME AND TRADE

Since 2013, net farm income is down 47% (\$58B), due in part to an oversupply of agriculture products and low commodity prices. Trade wars and tariffs have only exacerbated these issues – while we recognize the need for better trade agreements, there is no denying that these trade wars have had a negative impact on North Carolina agriculture. It is blatantly unfair that agriculture always takes the biggest hits in the midst of trade disputes!

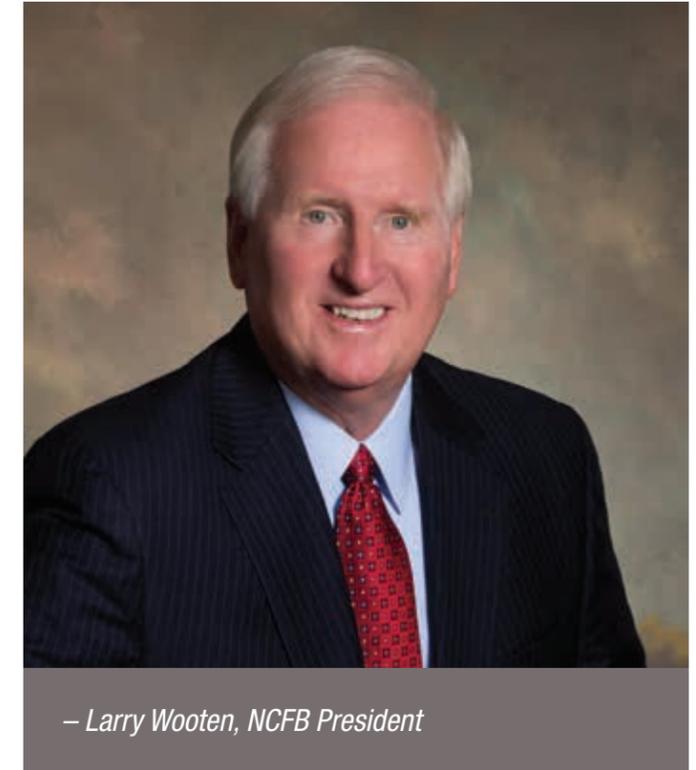
NUISANCE LAWSUITS

Ongoing nuisance lawsuits have destabilized the hog industry, a vital industry to North Carolina agriculture. We are actively engaged in this situation and are monitoring developments closely as they evolve. These lawsuits have already taken a toll on your fellow farmers and we are determined to support them and their way of life as best we can. But beyond these active lawsuits, we remain concerned about the possible repercussions for other agriculture operations when it comes to determining what is considered a nuisance.

On a positive note, the threat of these lawsuits has motivated friends of agriculture across our state to support North Carolina farms and farm families. If you want an example of grassroots leadership, look no further than our Young Farmers and Ranchers committees who launched a sign campaign called “Support Farm Families” that made it all the way to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

HURRICANES

As farmers, our lives and our livelihoods are impacted by the weather. Since 2014, North Carolina farmers have suffered losses from Hurricanes Arthur, Hermine, Julia, and most memorably Hurricane Matthew. But words cannot truly capture the devastation caused



– Larry Wooten, NCFB President

by Hurricanes Florence and Michael in 2018. These disastrous storms could not have arrived at a worse time for farmers, as 50% of tobacco, 95% of sweet potatoes, and 100% of cotton, peanuts, and soybeans had not been harvested.

We anticipate field crop and livestock losses to exceed \$1.2 billion.

I do not have to tell you that many of our farmers are in serious financial trouble. We are working alongside of the Commissioner and other ag interest groups to secure state and federal assistance for those who are suffering.

In an effort to provide some immediate help, we established the Hurricane Relief Fund through the North Carolina Farm Bureau Foundation. I am simply touched and overwhelmed at the generosity of the many groups and individuals who have contributed to our fund over the past few weeks to help support our hurricane victims. There were two large contributions from Bayer CropScience and Duke Energy that helped seed the fund, but we have also received countless contributions from our county Farm Bureaus, other state Farm Bureaus, private individuals, private nonprofits, and religious organizations.