

96. RURAL DEVELOPMENT

We will place rural development as one of our highest priorities.

We will:

1. Examine existing private and government rural development programs to determine their viability and practicality in improving the rural economy and quality of life in Illinois.
2. Support allowing the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program to make loan guarantees to farmer-owned projects sited in urban or urbanizing areas if the locations are the most economically viable to return benefits to the rural owners of the project.
3. Monitor the impact of the new definition of "Micropolitan Areas" and, if negative economic effects of rural areas are observed, support changes to that definition to better serve rural areas.
4. Develop a comprehensive program for coordinating rural development activities within the state and county Farm Bureau levels.
5. Support entrepreneurial programs that promote rural economic development including business incubator programs in rural high schools.
6. Identify specific rural initiatives which our organization will support during the development of our comprehensive program.
7. Urge county Farm Bureaus to take a leadership role in rural development programs and activities in cooperation with local business, political and agricultural leaders.
8. Provide county Farm Bureaus advice and guidance on rural development programs.
9. Work closely with county Farm Bureaus in the beginning and continuous stages of the rural development process, emphasizing the need for community development and economic development.
10. Urge the federal government to fully fund Rural Partners and similar projects. Additional federal funds should be provided to these types of projects which use volunteers instead of government agencies to solve rural problems.
11. Support additional USDA Rural Development funding and targeting a greater portion of all funds towards stimulating commerce in rural areas.
12. Support increased USDA Rural Development funding for technical and marketing assistance to provide value-added opportunities for farmers.
13. Support the concept of integrating community services through a single, local economic unit (such as a school) through voluntary local initiatives.
14. Support the designation of a government-based clearinghouse at both the federal and state levels to provide one-stop-shopping for information, coordination of all information regarding government sponsored or aided rural development programs, and information on allied non-governmental programs.
15. Support state and federal legislation to assist local governments to develop integrated Geographical Information Systems (GIS).
16. Urge local governments, when considering offering incentives for the purpose of spurring economic development, to:
 - A. Balance new-growth incentives against those available to existing businesses;
 - B. Make incentives contingent on promised performance;
 - C. Carefully examine program costs relative to the increase in economic activity and tax revenue generated by the development.
17. Support efforts to develop a program and support funding for low-interest loans to assist small business owners in locating and training a successor who would then purchase the business and continue its operation.
18. Encourage landowners to consider the value of allowing easements that improve rural services in areas that need the access to better water services.
19. Work with rural electric cooperatives, telephone cooperatives, and other entities that have existing infrastructure and expertise to provide broadband service to all rural areas. We encourage these entities to use grants and other sources of monetary assistance to provide these broadband services.

20. Support increased sources and levels of funding for developing and expanding broadband telecommunications service to rural areas.
21. Encourage ongoing studies regarding the quality of life and well-being of rural Illinois residents by the state of Illinois, universities and similar interest groups.