



Dates:



February 14  
Nomination deadline for Rural Illinois Champion

February 26-27  
Governmental Affairs Leadership Conference

March 5-6  
Rural Community Economic Development Conference

March 18  
General Primary Election

March 25  
National Agriculture Day

April 8  
Annual Town Meeting

January / February 2014

Volume 5 Issue 1

## Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012

Scheduled rate increases prompt Congressional action to delay

by Kevin Rund

The Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012 (BW-12) calls on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to make a number of changes to the way the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is run. But property owners have objected strongly to significant increases in the costs for flood insurance premiums, and Congress is responding.

Local units of government are caught in the middle of this skirmish being played out at the federal level. Counties and municipalities that participate in the NFIP are tasked with enforcing the provisions of that program within their boundaries. These significant swings in policy and increasing costs threaten to cause

issues locally, partly due to resistance among property owners to comply and partly because the regulations are very much a moving target.

The BW-12 requires FEMA to phase out insurance subsidies that have applied to owners of homes that were built in floodplains before the original federal flood insurance rate maps and building standards were created, typically in the 1970s and 1980s.

According to FEMA, "Some of these changes (of BW-12) already have occurred, and others will be implemented in the coming months. Key provisions of the legislation will require the NFIP to raise rates to reflect true flood risk,

(See **BW-12** on page 5)

*Did you know...*

**With few exceptions, not more than 3 public questions may be submitted to referendum with respect to a political subdivision at the same election.**



## County School Facility Occupation Tax

Will you be asked to vote for it in your county?

by Brenda Matherly

On March 18, several counties will be asking voters to vote on the County School Facility Occupation Tax (CSFOT). If the majority of voters in the county support the passage of a CSFOT, that will allow for the creation of a local county sales tax up to 1% for funding school construction projects.

So how does this question make it to the

ballot? The CSFOT law allows a county government board, by resolution, to place on the ballot the question of whether there will be an additional sales tax established. The county board may do this independently or upon the direction of a school district board representing 51% of the students enrolled in the county. The CSFOT rate shall not ex-

(See **CSFOT** on page 4)

# Local taxing district issues coming home to roost

The reality of plentiful taxing districts in Illinois

*by guest author*

*DeAnne Bloomberg, FBCM, Manager  
Rock Island County Farm Bureau®*

Each week it appears another taxing district in our county is dealing with an operating deficit or deferred maintenance in capital investments.

Up until recently, voters in Rock Island County were facing a possible five different tax questions on the March ballot: a rate increase for the deficit-stricken county nursing home (since dropped); a one percent school district occupation tax; a \$72-million referendum for a new county courthouse and county administration building (since dropped), and a quarter-cent public safety sales tax for

school buildings. Additionally, one school district is considering a \$15-million referendum for buildings.

The public debt load is increasing. How will we pay for it all? Can we afford it with our current taxing structure?

Everyone has become almost complacent with the decaying public infrastructure in the State of Illinois. Even worse, every year the lack of decision-making makes it worse, not only for the future but for any poor soul who is even considering running for public office to try and make a difference.

The value of Farm Bureau's policies are more important than ever. With the mounting public burden

facing local taxing districts and deferred maintenance at county office buildings and courthouses, the question I have is—where will the revenues come from?

How does Farm Bureau become a change agent in the communities around the State of Illinois? How do we engage not only our voting members but our associate members who find frustration in the lack of leadership taking place in all levels of government? Our volunteers have sat through ad hoc study committees and are frustrated with the lack of critical thinking and quantitative analysis in those meetings. It's easy to see why people would not want to try and run for public office considering the "old guard" keeps doing business as usual.

Our County Farm Bureau® had pushed the county to seriously reconsider the selfish need for a \$72 million courthouse and county office building redo when the schools are in such need of funds. How can we pay for it all? What will the property owner be willing to pay? Who's going to get involved and help local officials understand we "can't have it all".

This won't get any better with us sitting back and watching. It will take critical thinkers helping solve critically important problems. Whether attending county board meetings, engaging community leaders in the discussions, common sense Farm Bureau members are needed now more than ever.

Wouldn't it be better to be part of the discussion rather than waiting for someone else to drive the change?

## Rural Community Economic Development Conference

Plan to attend March 5 and 6 in Peoria

The 25th Annual Rural Community Economic Development Conference will bring together experts from across the country who will share their ideas and successful practices.

The conference is expected to bring in more than 350 attendees from across Illinois, including community volunteers, local elected officials, economic and community developers, and representatives of state and federal agencies. It's a unique opportunity for participants to meet and network with others engaged in rural development.

The conference, hosted by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs with the Governor's Rural Affairs Council and Rural Partners of Illinois, will be March 5 and 6 at the Marriott Pere Marquette in Peoria, Illinois.

The event will feature an exhibit hall where attendees can network with agencies, businesses, and organizations. Last year's event received wonderful reviews and we look forward to another great year in 2014.

More information at [www.iira.org/](http://www.iira.org/).

LINK

# GALC February 26-27

Register now — be a part of this growth experience



On February 26-27, 2014, Illinois Farm Bureau will hold its annual Governmental Affairs Leadership Conference (GALC) at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield, Illinois.

Over 400 Farm Bureau leaders from across the state attend this conference to receive information and training regarding our key public policy issues.

These two days will feature dynamic speakers, information, and training sessions. Farm Bureau leaders will have an opportunity to keep up with current issues and network with agency representatives and elected officials.

GALC will offer two general sessions, a legislative update, and four breakout sessions, each offer-

ing six separate workshops.

If you are interested in local government issues, you won't want to miss these workshops:

- *Illinois EMS Alliance - For the health of Illinois' Emergency Medical Services*, Wednesday, 1:00 p.m.
- *Local Government 101*, Wednesday, 3:15 p.m.
- *School Finance: The A, B, C's on Budgeting*, Thursday, 9:15 a.m.

Reserve your place at this conference! For details and to register, you may contact your county Farm Bureau manager, or visit our website at [www.ilfb.org](http://www.ilfb.org).

LINK

## Coles County Computer Training

Consider trying this in your county

Source: Mary Cox, Manager  
Coles County Farm Bureau®

For the past year, the Coles County Farm Bureau (CCFB) has been working with Broadband Illinois and Lake Land Community College to provide computer and internet training. As we become more of a computerized world, it is inevitable that people young and old will need access to computers and the ability to maneuver through the worldwide web.

When the CCFB was approached by Broadband Illinois about being part of a team that would

look at rural computer and internet usage, it was not a hard decision to make. This opportunity has been and continues to be a great way to interact with our membership.

In order to best serve our member's needs, we provided them with a survey that focused on their interest in and knowledge of computer and internet use.

We found that the older generation:

- Didn't own a computer
- Owned a computer, but did not know how to use it
- Wanted to learn basic com-

puter functions

Whereas, the younger generation:

- Uses the internet daily
- Uses computer(s) both for work and personal information
- Would like more training on smartphone and tablet use
- Would like more information specific computer programs

Based on this information and the interest of our members, we have been able to partner with Broadband Illinois and Lake Land Community College to of-

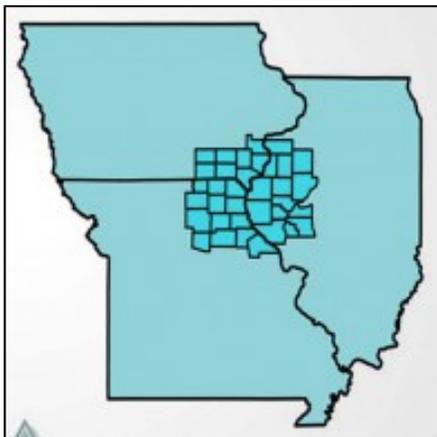
(See *Training* on page 6)



## Tri-State Development Summit Designated a USDA Great Region

In late November, USDA Rural Development State Directors from Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa announced the designation of the Tri-State Development Summit as a *Great Region*. Ms. Colleen Callahan (Illinois), Ms. Janie Dunning (Missouri) and Mr. Bill Menner (Iowa)—all from the USDA—were present to congratulate and recognize the Tri-State Development Summit.

Great Regions is a priority of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. Secretary Vilsack has stressed the importance of a regional approach to creating economic opportunity and job creation in rural communities. USDA supports rural communities that work together on a multi-county or regional basis, with a focus on the development and implementation of ground-level economic development plans.



State RD administrators spoke highly of the program. One goal of the Great Regions program is to work collaboratively with our partners throughout that region. That way we are more likely to serve more people and bridge any gaps in the availability of resources.

They added that resources of small, rural communities are often insufficient to meet demands when approached on an individual basis. But, when communities join together working for common goals, great things can happen. By taking a regional approach to solving problems, communities can combine assets, expertise and

knowledge to respond to challenges.

The support from USDA's RD can include training, technical support, actions to foster intra-regional collaboration, project funding for plan implementation and other support deemed useful.

*(See Tri-State on page 6)*

### BW-12

*(Continued from page 1)*

make the program more financially stable, and change how Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) updates impact policyholders. The changes will mean premium rate increases for some—but not all—policyholders over time."

In some cases, those premium rates could rise as much as tenfold over the next few years—due in large part to removal of current premium subsidies.

But, some members of Congress—particularly from coastal states—are trying to reform BW-12. They are pushing changes that would require FEMA to conduct an affordability study and re-evaluate new floodplain maps before insurance premiums could be increased, delaying onerous increases at least for a while.

On January 15, the House passed a \$1 trillion government spending bill that has attached to it a delay of at least nine months for implementation of BW-12 premium increases.

The Senate, too, is acting. Senators Menendez (D-NJ), Isakson (R-

GA) and Landrieu (D-LA) introduced S. 1846 providing for at least a four-year delay in implementation.

BW-12 provides a five-year authorization for the NFIP, one year of which has already lapsed. Some are expecting to see an amendment added or alternate legislation that would create a much longer glide path for those premium rate increases that would result from subsidy removals.

Proponents of the increases point out that the rate hike is designed to make property owners pay for the true risk of living in high flood hazard areas.

However this plays out, counties and municipalities participating in the NFIP will need to keep on top of any changes stemming from currently-pending legislation.

LINK

For a list of Illinois counties and municipalities participating in the NFIP, go to:

<http://www.fema.gov/cis/IL.pdf>

### Tri-State

*(Continued from page 5)*

The 35-county Tri-State Summit region has been collaborating over the past 17 years to define common issues, developing on-going dialogues to address those issues and improving the quality of life through economic development.

To be designated, a region must have an economic development plan in place, in process or be willing to prepare an economic development plan. In addition, the re-

gion must demonstrate an interest in increasing collaboration across counties and institutions. An economic development plan is generated by a local team with broad participation, built upon careful analysis of the region's assets and includes key current and emerging economic clusters.

For examples of USDA investments in rural communities, visit Rural Development's interactive web map at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/RDSuccessStories.html>. The map

### Training

*(Continued from page 3)*

fer classes on basic computer use. These classes offered a curriculum-based, hands-on training that helped the attendees to better understand basic computer functions. We are hoping to add more advanced classes on internet use, smartphone and tablet technology and specific program applications.

This focus on technology is not only allowing us to help prepare our members to be better connected, but it is also spurring the interest in adopting computer and internet use in the rural areas. Our hope is that our members will be able to gain the knowledge needed to see the benefits of this type of technology and connectivity, not only with their businesses, but also as an enhancement to the quality of rural living.

The opportunity to provide similar training in your county is simply a phone call away. Please feel free to contact Brenda Matherly with Illinois Farm Bureau® if you are interested in discussing the needs in your county. She can be reached at 309-557-3151 or via e-mail at [bmatherly@iffb.org](mailto:bmatherly@iffb.org).

LINK



## General Primary Election

March 18, 2014

features program funding and success stories for fiscal years 2009-2012.

LINK

### Internet Connectivity

*It's no longer only a matter of convenience, it's a growing necessity for conducting business. Many of the USDA's FSA functions are shifting to become electronic-based. Many of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's registry and reporting requirements can be met almost exclusively via the internet. Same goes for IDOT permits, UCR registrations, and some CDL requirements. It's a tool that farmers need to have and understand in order operate efficiently.*

