



Upcoming Dates:



September 15-21:
Farm Safety Week

October 7-9:
National Direct Ag Summit

October 11:
County Resolution Submittal Deadline

October 16-18:
Managers to Washington

November 6:
Statewide Resolution Committee Meeting

December 7-10:
IAA® Annual Meeting

September/October 2019

Volume 10 Issue 5

County government counts on you for fair representation

by Brenda Matherly

How quickly a decade rolls around. That might be what your county government is thinking. At least once per decade, following the U.S. Census, county government, whose members are elected by district, will need to redraw their district boundaries. At the same time, county government boards might reassess the number of members serving on the board and the structure in which those members are elected—at large or by district.

Following the 2020 U.S. Census, a priority for many county governments will be the requirement to redraw those district boundary lines. This is done to satisfy the constitutional concept of one person, one vote. County boards who are elected by district use boundaries to subdivide the county, based largely on population. Voters in each of those districts elect a representative(s) from that area to represent them on county issues. Conversely, county boards who are elected at large, are elected by all voters to serve the entire county.

will show population changes. In counties, this means some districts will gain residents, and some will lose them. Therefore, those district boundaries will be redrawn to ensure each district has the same number of people, complying with the constitutional assurance that each voter has an equal say.



By statute, counties with population of less than 3,000,000 and with a township form of government, will have a reapportionment plan approved by the county board no later than July 1,

2021 (55 ILCS 5/2-3002). By Statute, counties operating under the commission form of government, where the commissioners are elected by district, shall reapportion the county commission districts on or before May 31 of the year following each U.S. Census (55 ILCS 5/2-4006.5).

Outside of redrawing district boundaries, residents have an opportunity to get involved in the action. A reapportionment plan can also call for a change in the current board structure. Those can include a change in:

Data gathered from the U.S. Census

(See **Census** on page 2)



Did You Know...?

Illinois harvests about **12,300 acres** of pumpkins annually! Morton, IL, in **Tazewell** county is the Pumpkin Capital of the World!"





It's time for a shout-out! October will mark the graduation of our fifth class of *Think LINK* participants. Congratulations to:

- Kathy Knight, Brown County Farm Bureau® (page 3)
- Gay Bowlin, Franklin County Farm Bureau® (page 6)
- Kristin Huls, Hancock County Farm Bureau® (page 3)
- Katie Wilson, Montgomery County Farm Bureau® (page 4)

Each of these managers did an outstanding job and have successfully completed this program with an intense focus on local government awareness and involvement.

Think LINK, now in its fourth year, continues to target newer county Farm Bureau managers. The program is intended to raise their awareness, understanding and comfort level with local government—and ultimately their involvement.

To help achieve these goals, Illinois Farm Bureau® staff spends a year working with the new manager participants. Much of that time is spent in the county, with learning exercises aimed at producing results that have practical application.

To showcase their participation, our *Think LINK* managers each wrote an article on a local government topic of interest to them. Those articles are included in this publication of LINK.

Make sure to congratulate each of these managers on a job well done!

Census

(Continued from page 1)

- The number of districts
- The number of members per district: Multi-member, single-member, or single-member in the rural areas and multi-members elected within a municipality over 75,000.
- Method of election: At large or by district
- Number of board members: No fewer than five and no more than 29 members. But, may not exceed the size of the county board in that county on October 2, 1969.

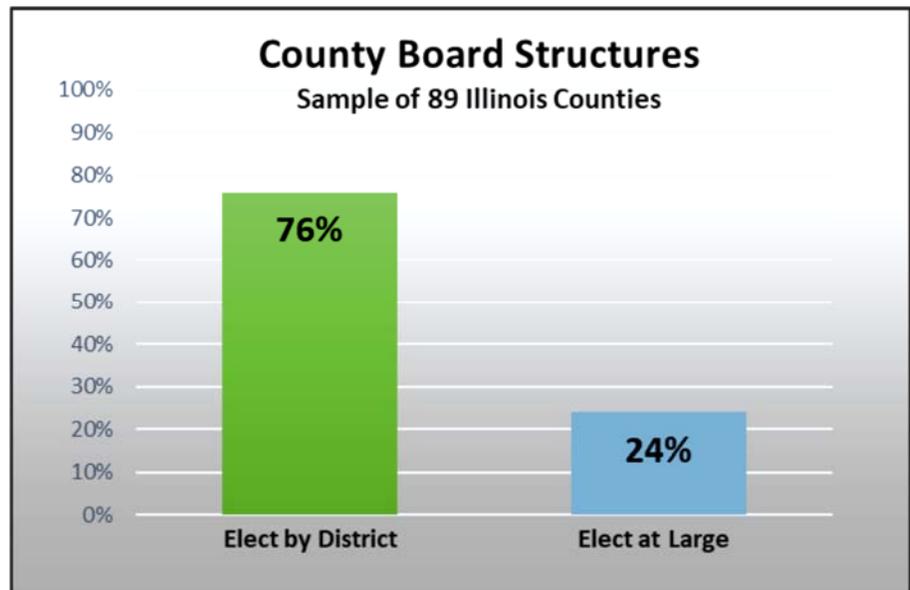
While the U.S Census opens the door for these decennial determinations, prior to their approval, the board shall conduct at least one public hearing to re-

ceive comments from county residents.

As you can see, every person counts when the U.S. Census rolls around. Your participation has long-lasting impact on all

levels of government. However, as one of the closets units of government to the people, county government is relying on that population count in order to fairly represent you.

LINK



The US Census

Make your community count

by Kristin Huls, Manager
Hancock County Farm Bureau®

Have you ever wondered why it is important to complete the U.S. Census or what the data is used for? This population count, legally mandated by the U.S. Constitution, has been completed every ten years since 1790 as an effort to count all people living on American soil. Not only are the results of the census used for allocation of Congressional seats, but also in determining federal funding for many programs that may impact us at the local level. For example, many USDA programs are specifically designed to serve "rural" areas, which is defined as "any areas other than 1) A city or town with a population greater than 50,000 inhabitants; and 2) The urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to such a city or town, as defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census." (www.census.gov)

Why is it important to provide complete and accurate information in the 2020 U.S. Census?

- In Illinois, municipalities receive motor fuel tax (MFT) disbursements based on population. Therefore, an inaccurate count could result in loss of funding for construction and improvements of roads and bridges in your community.
- As businesses look to grow and expand into your community, it is imperative they secure an accurate workforce. They turn to census data to provide this information. An accurate count helps to ensure there will be enough workers to fill the jobs they create through their potential investment.
- In Illinois, census data is used to help determine location of



emergency response units throughout the state. An accurate count helps to ensure these necessary services are within close proximity to residents in your community. This is especially important in rural areas, which continue to face decreasing population.

- Illinois is at risk for losing one, possibly two, Congressional seats as a result of thousands of residents leaving the state. An accurate count helps minimize the impact of this movement, which is not

(See **Count** on page 5)

Get to know your county board

by Kathy Knight, Manager,
Brown County Farm Bureau®
Source: *Inside the Courthouse*

The Illinois Constitution mandates that a county board be elected in each county. The number of county board members that are elected to the board is determined by an ordinance in each county. Our county, being a township organization, consists of nine board members. The county board of directors are elected at large.

The number of board members and, if elected by district, the number of districts a county has is decided by the county board.

Like other county boards, we have mandatory functions that have to be carried out. Some of those include:

- Electing a chairman to conduct meetings, hold meetings at scheduled times and providing minutes of each meeting;

- Allowing space, fixtures and other necessary equipment for county offices;
- Adopting an annual budget/preparing annual financial reports;
- Evaluating all claims made on county funds.

Additional functions performed by many county boards, including ours are:

(See **Board** on page 5)

Funding drainage districts: not a tax but rather an assessment

by Brenda Matherly

Drainage districts are not funded by the "traditional" levying of property taxes. In fact, State statute does not reference taxes because it does not provide a requirement or establish an authority for drainage districts to levy taxes. However, drainage districts may levy and collect assessments on the lands they serve.

Drainage district commissioners may levy three types of assessments on property receiving a benefit from the district. A general discretion of the assessments is provided below:

1. **Original or Initial Assessments:** Those levied to cover the cost of construction of the original work done for the creation of the district.
2. **Annual Maintenance Assessments:** Those levied to cover the costs of annual maintenance, the routine operation of pumping plants, and to pay the current expenses of the district.
3. **Additional or Special Assessments:** Those levied to cover the costs of additional maintenance or repair work and the added construction or repair of pumping plants.

Drainage districts:

Entrenched in Illinois History

by Katie Wilson, Manager
Montgomery County Farm Bureau®

Drainage districts fall under the umbrella of "special districts" in the state of Illinois. Special districts differ from general-purpose units of government, counties, townships and municipalities, in that they provide a single service or group of individual services to the residents and properties within their boundary. The functions they undertake

range from vital services such as fire protection and water supply to more quality-of-life enhancing services like historic preservation and mosquito abatement.



According to the Illinois Association of Drainage Districts, in the 1800s, farmers dug man-made ditches for the sole purpose of draining unproductive swamp-land and turning it into lush, fertile farm ground. These man-made ditches today serve the same purpose of draining storm runoff as they have for centuries. The only difference is some ditches drain acres of farmland and others drain miles of concrete.

Montgomery County Farm Bureau® Director and farmer, Kris Reynolds, is very familiar with the importance of drainage districts to farmers across the state. "Drainage districts provide landowners both the physical

infrastructure and financial structure to farm Illinois' most fertile and productive cropland," that might otherwise find itself underwater. Reynolds also believes "drainage districts provide a fair system to allow funding for improvement and maintenance of subsurface drainage and surface drainage ditches."

Building and maintaining drains and levees are key functions of drainage districts. The districts

receive funding for these projects from the landowners who have property in the district. A fee is assessed to the landowners each year. All drainage districts are court approved and may be formed

by petition or referendum and, as stated above, are a unit of local government.

Illinois had one of the wettest springs on record this year. The Illinois State Climatologist has recorded anywhere from 25 to 50 inches of rainfall in 2019 for the state as a whole. All of that water needs to go somewhere. Where would it be going without the help of drainage districts in certain areas?

If you are interested in learning about the number of drainage districts in your county, where they are located, or who the commissioners are, visit your local County Clerk's office.

LINK

Count

(Continued from page 3)

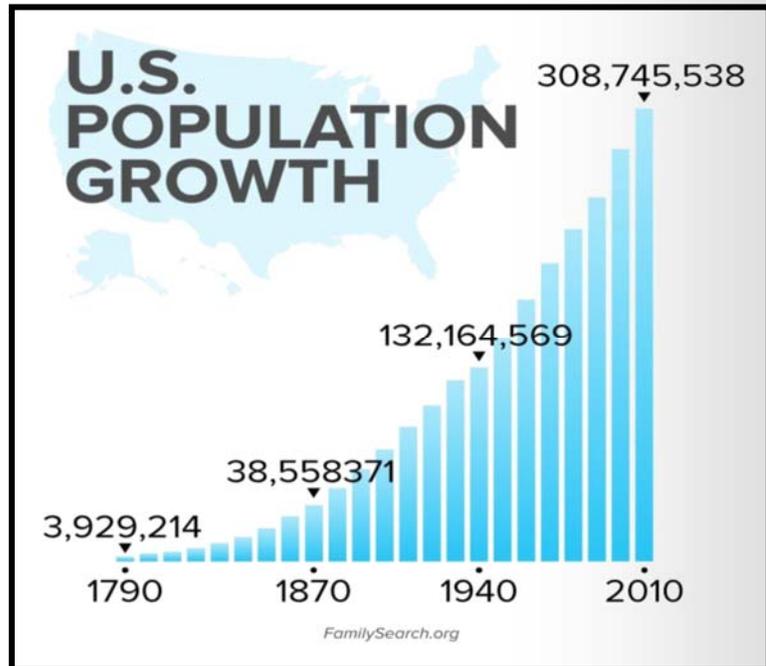
only important for Illinois, but for rural America in general. As legislative matters arise (ex. broadband connectivity in rural areas, Farm Bill passage, etc.), it is critical to have ample representation in Washington, D.C. to stand up for the rights of our farmers and rural citizens.

What can our county Farm Bureaus (CFBs) do to encourage members to complete the U.S. census in a timely manner?

- Encourage your CFB board to establish local policy in support of census participation.
- Offer computer assistance at your office to Farm Bureau members or members of the general public to complete the online census form. (Added bonus: promote Farm Bureau membership benefits to those who aren't current members.)
- Promote and encourage census participation at upcoming programs or trade show booths.
- Promote and encourage census participation through your CFB newsletter or publication.

Be sure to mark April 1, 2020, on your calendar as official "count day" for the 2020 U.S. Census. Uphold your obligation as a U.S. citizen and make your community count!

[LINK](#)



Board

(Continued from page 3)

- Overseeing the care and custody of county owned property;
- Assuming general management responsibilities for collecting and administering federal funds, collecting taxes on property and issuing bonds to provide funds for acquisition or construction of capital equipment projects;
- Governance over public and environmental health and safety. The county board may act as a board of health or establish a health department which they have to provide various services;
- Engaging in land use planning and zoning; including management over building and safety codes, building permits, and subdivision regulations;
- Providing employment procedures, personnel policies, and various types of insurance;
- Taking part in emergency services planning to provide ambulance services, police and fire communication systems and working closely with other public agencies to deliver emergency services;
- Overseeing the construction of highways, roads, bridges and culvert.
- Supporting local elections authority with regard to all aspects of the election.

If you have not had the opportunity to meet with your county board, I encourage you to do so. County boards have a huge responsibility to your county and can be a good friend.

[LINK](#)

Franklin County voters support local sales tax to fund new courthouse

by Gay Bowlin, Manager,
Franklin County Farm Bureau®

The Franklin County Farm Bureau helped spread the word about a local referendum to establish a countywide sales tax to fund a new and improved courthouse. Voters in Franklin County showed support for the new facility.

The Franklin County courthouse, built over 140 years ago, does not meet today's minimum courthouse standards set down by the Supreme Court of Illinois. However, a new courthouse does not come cheap. Faced with a steep price tag, the County Board placed a referendum on the April 2, 2019 ballot asking voters to approve an increase in the local sales tax to help fund the project.

With the passage of the referendum, a 1% increase in the local sales tax will be added to most retail purchases made in the county. Retail sales exempt from the increase will include things such as groceries, gas, titled vehicles, medications, and farm machinery.

The sales tax increase will help distribute the tax burden to visitors, as well as residents. National statistics show that 30-40% of the revenue will come from people living outside of the county, passing through or visiting our many campgrounds, restaurants and businesses. If the sales tax increase had not passed, it's probable that the funding for the project would have instead come from real estate taxes, placing all the burden on property owners in the county.

All the money collected is to be used specifically for the purpose of rebuilding the courthouse and accommodations for the offices of the County Clerk and the Treasurer. The referendum also required the increased sales tax sunset when the debt is repaid. The estimated cost for the courthouse project is \$15 million with a sunset of 15 years. The sales tax increase is expected to bring in \$1.4 million a year—estimated from a current 1% sales tax in place for the school districts.

Twice before the county included a referendum on the ballot with no success. The county's success this time was likely due to improved community outreach that included:

- A feasible plan
- Renderings of what a new courthouse would look like
- Town hall meetings around the county
- Presentation to the county Farm Bureau Board prior to the election

The county Farm Bureau felt the immediate need was to get the sales tax passed so a new courthouse could be built. To help support this effort, we mailed letters to almost 400 farmers explaining the alternative to a property tax increase, how the sales tax revenue will be used and exemptions on qualifying farm products. Franklin County Farm Bureau is pleased that the 1% sales tax passed.

LINK

Voters in Franklin County passed a 1% sales tax increase to fund a new courthouse:

April 2, 2019 Sales tax referendum:

To pay for public facility purposes, the construction of a new Franklin County Courthouse and to complete renovations to the Campbell Building to accommodate the offices of the Franklin County Clerk and Treasurer, shall the County of Franklin be authorized to impose an increase on its share of local sales taxes by one percent (1%) for a period not to exceed 15 years? Yes () No ()



Get to Know Your Local Official: Treasurer

(Source: *Inside the Courthouse*
Illinois Association of County Board Members)

Primary Duties

The county treasurer serves as the county's banker, responsible for the safe keeping and prudent investing of public funds. As the lawful custodian of county funds, the treasurer has the responsibility to receive and distribute the revenue and public monies of the county.

The treasurer must keep an account of all monies received by the county and all monies paid out, stating the time, to whom payment is made, and on what account payment has been made. Payments must be specifically authorized by law or by the county board. The treasurer must invest and reinvest any funds that are not used within 30 days. Investments are made in savings accounts, treasury bills, certificate of deposits and other interest bearing bank accounts which allow for the liquidity, safety of principal and maximum return of investment. Each month the treasurer's books of account are subject to the provisions of the Local Records Act and are available for inspection by any person wishing to examine them.

The Public Funds Investment Act requires counties to have a written investment policy to address safety of principal, liquidity of funds, and return on investment. This policy is to be adopted by the county treasurer and presented to the county board.

The county treasurer also serves as county collector of taxes. The county collector is responsible for the preparation of tax bills and for the collection and distribution of property taxes. Real estate taxes are due in two yearly installments. The first installment is due around June 1 and the second is due around September 1 of each year. Upon receipt of the tax monies the county collector proceeds to disburse these funds to the various taxing districts. Along with the collection of real estate taxes, the county treasurer also collects Mobile Home Local Service Taxes.

The county collector holds a tax sale at the end of every tax year to sell the tax on parcels that re-

main unpaid. The county collector gives notice of the intended application for judgment of sale of delinquent lands and lots by publication of a notice in the local newspaper. Properties for which the taxes haven't been paid for two or more years are subject to a scavenger sale. The purpose of the scavenger sale is to return delinquent and deteriorating property to productive use as quickly as possible. For this reason the amount required to be paid by the tax purchaser is less than the accumulated tax delinquencies.



Other Responsibilities

County treasurers assist senior citizens in filing for real estate tax deferral. The Senior Citizens Real Estate Tax Deferral Program provides tax relief for qualified senior citizens by allowing them to defer all or part of their property tax and special assessment payments on their principal residence. The deferral is similar to a loan against the property's fair market value. Deferred amounts are borrowed from the state, who then pays the tax bill to the County Collector's Office.

Training

The Office of County Treasurer is open to lay persons. Within 60 days of assuming office, a treasurer must apply to the state comptroller for admission to the comptroller's county treasurer training program. The program must be completed within one year after applying for admission and each treasurer must complete the program at least once during their term of office.

Term

County treasurer is an elected office serving a four-year term. The county treasurer is commissioned by the governor.

LINK

National Farm Safety & Health Week

September 15-21

The U.S. Agricultural Centers funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) urges everyone involved in agriculture to recognize National Farm Safety and Health Week—September 15-21.

Each year since 1944, the third week of September has been designated as National Farm Safety & Health Week. Though

that week is winding down, work to carry its recommended safety practices throughout the fall harvest.

The 2019 theme for National Farm Safety & Health Week is “Shift Farm Safety Into High Gear.”

Please join us in promoting safe and healthy practices on

our farms and ranches across Illinois.



National Direct Ag Summit

October 7-9 in Chicago

The Summit provides a unique networking opportunity for direct agricultural market practitioners to form new partnerships and learn new business strategies that can improve the performance of their farms and businesses, and benefit rural Illinois.

The Summit features resources to assist market managers, direct marketing farmers, and agribusinesses as well as practitioners or technical assistance providers in understanding and enhancing direct marketing efforts. Summit attendees represent diverse backgrounds from public and private sector representing farmers, academics, entrepreneurs, service providers, mission-focused investors, business operators, community practitioners, students, consultants, and government employees from state and Federal agencies.

The Summit focus on

“Entrepreneurship Opportunities Across the Food Value Chain” focusing on direct to consumer markets, local food systems and value added technical assistance. Experts and resources from the public and private sector will be highlighted throughout the 3-day event.

- Farm Credit
- MarketMaker and the Global Food Agricultural Network
- University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture
- Illinois Farm Bureau
- Agricultural Marketing Resource Center at Iowa State University
- Farmers Market Coalition

Summit will be held at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Illinois (a northwest suburb of Chicago - October 7-9, 2019.

This year’s conveners include:

- USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

<https://www.rosemont.com/desconvention/>