

IL Corn Growers Association  
Political Action Committee Newsletter

# Maize Matters



[www.ilcorn.org](http://www.ilcorn.org)

## IL CORN ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

The IL Corn Growers Association represents our members and works hard to ensure member needs and priorities were met through our efforts at the state and national level. Grassroots advocacy paired with political support is the only way we are positioned to successfully present your priorities. Thank you for supporting our PAC as we highlight six accomplishments from this year.

### 1. Mexico GMO Corn Ban

At the end of 2022, the President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel Lopez issued a decree banning the import of all genetically modified (GM) corn. In early 2023, that decree was amended to only ban imports of GMO corn for food use. Mexico is the top foreign market for U.S. corn, so IL Corn worked closely

with industry partners regulators and elected officials to address the issue. The proposed ban violates terms of the U.S. Mexico Canada Agreement (USMCA) which prohibits barriers to trade that are not based in science.

ICGA and other partners worked closely to elevate the issue among elected officials, including outreach to the White House and Capitol Hill where farmer leaders emphasized the potential impact of the ban on farmers and rural Illinois. This summer, the U.S. Trade Representative's office finally moved forward with an official trade dispute settlement process under USMCA provisions. We remain cautiously optimistic for a positive resolution to the issue in early 2024.



TL: Nikki Budzinski (D-13) speaks on a panel with farmers about the Next Generation Fuels Act during the Farm Progress Show. TM: Farmers build relationships with members of the IL Latino Caucus during board meetings in Chicago. TR: Former ICGA President Matt Rush holds an event for Mike Bost (R-12) on his farm. BL: Rep. Darrin LaHood (R-16) meets with farmers in D.C. BM: IL Corn staff converse with Rep. Eric Sorensen (D-17) at the Farm Progress Show. BR: Rep. Mary Miller (R-15) talks with ICGA at State Fair.



## 2. Export Market Development

On average, about half of Illinois' corn production leaves the state – primarily destined for overseas markets. So, the development and expansion of foreign corn, ethanol and DDGS markets is critical to Illinois corn farmers. The USDA's Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development Cooperator Program (FMD) are essential tools that help private industry access international markets and build strong trade relationships abroad. These programs have an estimated return of nearly \$25 for every \$1 of MAP/FMD invested. Despite the incredible success of these programs, funding levels have not changed since 2006. This year, members of both the House and Senate have introduced marker bills that call for doubling MAP and FMD funding in the new Farm Bill. After significant outreach and education, eight Illinois Representatives – including all House Agriculture Committee members - and both Senators have cosponsored the bills

## 3. Lock and Dam Funding

In addition to the updates on Lock and Dam 25, ICGA has lobbied alongside the Waterways Council Inc. to ensure more funding is set aside for the LaGrange lock system. Illinois members of congress earmarked \$120 million in appropriations requests which would bring improvements to Illinois's inland waterways systems. We thank Reps. Darin LaHood (IL-16), Eric Sorensen (IL-17), and Nikki Budzinski (IL-13) for their support.

## 4. Next Generation Fuels Act

The Next Generation Fuels Act hit milestones this year after its reintroduction in the House and Senate. Outreach for the bill has been successful and the legislation has more co-sponsors than its prior introduction. In addition, a coalition of agriculture, automakers, and oil companies regrouped to tackle the task of getting the bill across the finish line. ICGA continues to connect with policymakers and foster relationships. This legislation will guide the future of the liquid fuel industry.

# FARM BILL UPDATE WITH HOUSE AG COMMITTEE MEMBER MIKE BOST

A member of the House Agriculture Committee for six years, Rep. Mike Bost's (IL-12) desire to represent agriculture in his district landed him back on the committee after a two-year leave.

A supporter of food and farmers, Bost spoke with IL Corn following the House's extension of the 2018 farm bill in mid-November. He said a permanent five-year bill is at the top of his priority list and expects to see the House act on the bill early next year.

"Every communication we have had with the Chair is

## 5. Farm Bill

Although the farm bill has yet to pass, ICGA has been successful in rallying support to protect crop insurance. We understand crop insurance is the most important priority to many of our members and have worked tirelessly to ensure it continues to be an adequate program for our farmer members.

## 6. State Ethanol Tax Incentive

Your PAC contributions helped us gain access to key players for state discussions on ethanol and renewable fuels. This year, the passage of three ethanol tax incentives during Illinois's spring legislative session was one of our biggest successes. The legislation was originally sponsored by Senator Patrick Joyce (D-Essex) and reduced the percentage of retail sales tax on E15 blends by 10 percent; mid-range blends by 20 percent; and reauthorizes the 100 percent reduction of sales tax for majority blended ethanol fuels (E-85). The tax incentives will sunset on December 31, 2028.

"PAC contributions give us access to conversations we need to participate in to protect agriculture and our corn farmers," said ICGA President Dave Rylander. "Public policy is a marathon not a sprint. Our staff and your contributions allow us to be in the game for a long time and build relationships that affect change."



Illinois State Senator Patrick Joyce (D-40) receives IL Corn's 2023 Ethanol Award.

aggressively going out to try and get it (permanent farm bill) done in that first quarter," Bost said. "And by getting it done in the first quarter, then that puts the pressure on the Senate."

Because the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers border Bost's district, export markets and crop insurance are pertinent to the lawmaker and his constituents. Bost said the assurance of crop production year-over-year and the growth of foreign markets is critical for farmers in the state.

"I represent 10,000 farmers in Illinois," Bost said. "You know, they deserve the insurance that something's going to be



(Cont. Bost) stable... We've got to make sure that we expand our markets and work to expand our markets for all our farm opportunities. This makes sure that our prices are up and that we have a place to sell the fruits of our labor."

As Congress looks to pass a farm bill during an election year, Bost assured IL Corn he would be busy doing his work to push the bill across the finish line. He says both sides of the aisle must work together to accomplish the goal.

"There are people you know, on the far right, that don't want to vote for a farm bill. There are people on the far left that don't want to vote for a farm bill," Bost said. "We will work with them to put things in there that get us the most where we need to be, but a farm bill must be bipartisan."

Before his time in Washington D.C., Bost served as a member of the Illinois House of Representatives and led its Republican Caucus Chair. A former member of the U.S. military, he serves as the Chairman of the Veteran's affairs committee and a member of the Transportation & Infrastructure committee.



**Rep. Mike Bost discusses priorities with corn farmers in his office during a trip to D.C. in March.**

## **STATE AND NATIONAL PAC: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?**

It's important to ICGA that our members have information about their Political Action Committee (PAC) contributions. A portion of your membership dues will be used to fund the IL Corn Growers Association Political Involvement Committee under the provision of 10 ILCS 5/9-8.5(i). Up to 50% of your fees will be placed in the state PAC. The remaining portion of your dues payments may be deductible by members as an ordinary business expense.

Both the state and national PACs have varying rules that are important for farmers to know as they can contribute to these funds. ICGA's state PAC supports elected officials in Illinois's General Assembly. Business checks and cash payments can be contributed to the state ICGA PAC. The federal PAC has stricter contribution regulations. Only personal and individual checks can be used to benefit the ICGA federal PAC. ICGA's federal PAC supports candidates and elected officials representing you in Washington D.C.

"Your generous donations to our PACs allow us to be politically impactful when we lobby for our membership's top priorities," said ICGA president Dave Rylander. "Thank you for your support."



**Senator Tammy Duckworth met with the Illinois State FFA officers during their trip to D.C. with IL Corn in July.**

## **5TH ANNUAL DRAWDOWN FUNDRAISER COMING SOON**

**Proceeds raised in this drawdown will benefit the Illinois Corn Growers Association Political Action Committee (ICGA PAC). The ICGA PAC helps provide the Association a seat at the table with our nation's legislators to discuss issues relevant to your farming operation.**





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## YOUR SEAT AT THE TABLE

*By Steve Pigg, Bushnell*

The dark, wooden table in my family's dining room has witnessed more intentional conversations than I can count. My wife and each of our kids have their own seat where we share stories, thoughts, goals, and objectives. Tables have a way of bringing people and ideas together.

However, if you don't have a seat, it is hard to have your voice heard. Instead of a robust discussion, it can seem like a game of musical chairs, walking around aimlessly, fighting for your position in the conversation. Without a consistent spot you get left out of the important exchanges and are stuck standing on the sidelines as others take part in the action. The IL Corn Growers Association takes its role seriously in providing you a seat at the table in Springfield and Washington D.C.

## C2A: YEAR IN REVIEW

We asked and you answered! Thank you to those who participated in ICGA's 2023 Call To Actions. Through our membership and outreach system we were able to help your voice be heard on priorities important to you.

In 2023, ICGA added 388 individuals to the advocacy system. A whopping 925 opposition statements were submitted to NHTSA's aggressive mileage rule which would decimate corn demand. An additional 507 comments of opposition were submitted to an

Our membership and PAC contributions give us an invitation to conversations affecting our farms at the state and national level. In addition to my role as a farmer in Bushnell, I serve as the Political Action Committee (PAC) Chairman. The board consists of farmer members from Illinois's congressional districts who meet and discuss how to make a significant impact with your PAC contributions.

Through our state and federal PACs, ICGA gives us the opportunity to show up and call out your priorities with a purpose. These programs give us the space to bring people together for intentional discussions, giving you a spot for your voice to be heard. Do you want to play a role? Take a seat, we have a spot saved for you.

EPA docket increasing emissions standards in a variety of vehicles

IL Corn has closely monitored and advocated with administration and congressional offices regarding the threat of Mexico's proposed ban on genetically modified corn. The proposed ban violates USMCA requirements. We are grateful that dispute settlement processes are underway and look forward to a positive outcome for Illinois corn farmers.