



Farm Bureaus **Protect At-Risk Farmers** with Local Government Monitoring Tool

Automated alerts from Curate give local leaders advance warning of ordinances that threaten farmers



Lack of Visibility in Local Government Meant Harmful Ordinances Became Law

Minor changes to county or municipal ordinances related to water quality, land conservation, transportation, and other issues can disrupt farmers' operations and even put them out of business. Before using Curate, the nine Farm Bureau Districts of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau had no awareness of discussions that were happening within their local governments and often missed the opportunity to engage local officials before harmful ordinances became law.



Tracking Local Issues “On a Wing and a Prayer”

The Wisconsin Farm Bureau's job is to advocate for farms across the state at local, state, and federal government levels, but prior to discovering local government monitoring software from Curate, the organization had little visibility into the discussions that were happening within local governments.

“Prior to Curate, tracking local issues was basically a wing and a prayer,” says Steve Boe, director of local affairs, Wisconsin Farm Bureau. “The reality of me searching through 71 county websites and trying to locate specific documents and agendas is just not practicable.”

The organization relied exclusively on word of mouth to learn about what was happening at the local level. More often than not, the farm bureaus never got word of harmful ordinances until after they had passed.

To effectively advocate for farms, **the Farm Bureau needs to learn about discussions before they reach a vote.** If they find an issue in time, they can meet with officials to share the ways the proposals could negatively impact local farmers and ideally stop harmful legislation or at least reach a compromise.

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Wisconsin Farm Bureau Gets Ahead of Policy Change

After getting set up in Curate, it wasn't long before Boe received an automated alert about a proposal in Sauk County related to changes to the local manure storage ordinance. Those changes would have included many negative ramifications for farmers.

One item in the proposal was a new definition of a manure storage structure, classifying anything that held more than 175 cubic feet as a manure storage structure—much smaller than the previous ordinance.

Under these rules, “a little pile of manure would have been classified as storage,” Boe says. “Any manure storage that goes in now has to be designed to specs. An engineer has to approve it. We’re talking about a pretty big financial investment, and it had the potential to prohibit or extend the transfer of a farm from one generation to the next.”

Because Boe found the proposal before it went to a vote, he was able to bring it to the attention of the county Farm Bureau, who made a presentation to the local elected officials about the ramifications of the proposed changes for farmers. The committee



postponed a vote on the ordinance by about 18 months, and said they would work with the farm bureau to find common ground.

“Without Curate, that would have very likely gone unnoticed until after the fact,” Boe says.

Local Farm Bureaus Now Anticipate Local Policy Changes

Empowered with information about key advocacy topics being discussed and placed on the agendas of local government, the local affairs directors now have visibility into not only what's happening in their district, but what issues are trending in their region.

Utilizing the premium filtering options of their Curate subscription, Boe and the Farm Bureau are able to quickly generate individual reports for each of the nine local affairs directors. The reports include mentions of the organization's key advocacy topics within all of the counties in each district so everyone is aware of any relevant activity in their area.

“My rule of thumb is, if it's happening in a neighboring county, it's likely to be talked about in your county at some point in the near future,” Boe says.

This strategy has allowed the Wisconsin Farm Bureau to more effectively protect its members from harmful local legislation using information from Curate that keeps them in the know about issues before they come to a vote.



About Wisconsin Farm Bureau

As the voice for farms of all sizes and management styles across Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Farm Bureau works to ensure farmers' needs and concerns are heard on the local, state and federal level. The statewide organization employs a staff of four government relations directors and works with volunteers within nine districts across the state to engage with local governments.

The Wisconsin Farm Bureau began using local government monitoring software from Curate in November 2020 to help volunteers stay in the know about discussions happening at the local level.



About Curate

Curate is a civic intelligence company providing local government monitoring software that tracks meeting minutes and agenda items from 12,000+ municipalities. Government affairs teams use Curate to gain more visibility into local government activities in order to monitor risk, advance key initiatives and spot opportunities.