Written by Laurie Johns
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WEST DES MOINES, IOWA – Jan. 28, 2011 – Iowa Farm Bureau members support many aspects of Governor Branstad's $6.1 billion budget, starting with the $160 million in direct property tax relief to Iowans, an issue that Farm Bureau members have sought from previous administrations and legislatures.

"The Governor, just like farmers, has made several tough decisions in order to correct our budget shortfalls. We all need to live within our means and our government is no exception," said Iowa Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF) President Craig Lang. "Our members across the state agree that small businesses are a key to Iowa's vital economic growth. Supporting them will help make us more attractive for new employers and their jobs."

Branstad, who was designated as a Farm Bureau Friend of Agriculture in the fall campaign, also noted that strong growth in agriculture provides Iowa with a unique opportunity to fix its budget. Property tax reform has long been the cornerstone of budget reform heralded by IFBF, because in the past decade, Iowa property taxes have soared by $1.59 billion, or 60 percent.

Branstad said that while tax policy reforms can help Iowa compete for new jobs, a bureaucracy that "fails to understand the critical relationship between burdensome regulation and job creation" can undo Iowa's economic progress. IFBF agrees and has long called for measures to strengthen the legislative oversight of Iowa's rule-making process. "Placing unnecessary regulatory and financial hurdles in front of responsible Iowa farmers impacts the success and diversity of Iowa's important ag sector," said Lang.

Iowa's largest grassroots farm organization has long supported the state's academic and athletic programs. "Education has always been a top priority for Farm Bureau. The funding of education is shared between the State of Iowa and property taxpayers, and we stress the importance of the state funding their commitment to education," said Lang. Branstad's 2012 budget calls for fully funding the school budget, which last year was underfunded by $156 million, leaving local school districts to levy additional property taxes to fill the void.

IFBF members look forward to working with lawmakers and the Governor during this legislative session to give Iowans what they want: a fiscally-responsible budget and a real chance for Iowa's statewide economic growth.

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