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Good morning. I am pleased to be with you today to promote the bill to ban sky lanterns in Erie County. While others speak to the animal physiology and other reasons to keep the sky lantern materials off of our farms, I wish to speak to the process used to come up with the policy we are advocating for this morning.

First, I want to be sure you understand that Farm Bureau is the advocacy organization for farmers. We are non-governmental, non-partisan and not for profit.

Our members create the policies that steer our organization. Individual members, in this case Mr. Zilke, bring forth a policy concern, write a resolution and submit it to their county Farm Bureau. If possible the resolution is proposed to the county board of directors first to further refine it and to get some initial feedback. This resolution is then voted on at the annual meeting of the county Farm Bureau. In Erie County this represents a little over 400 members. Resolutions of a state or national nature that pass at the county level are sent to the state meeting in December. At that meeting, delegates from each of the 52 counties representing approximately 11,000 members in the state which have a county organization evaluate proposed resolutions and adopt state policy for the year. National resolutions approved at this convention are forwarded to the American Farm Bureau Federation meeting in January.

The resolution we base our visit to you this morning upon is a state policy which was passed by members of the Erie County Farm Bureau then discussed and adopted by approximately 120 delegates from throughout New York State. In addition to this scrutiny, sections of our policy book are annually reevaluated to determine that the intent of the policy is still relevant – that the objective has not yet been accomplished or that policies don't conflict with one another. If so, such policies are recommended for deletion or combining, but the state delegates still make the ultimate decision of what is kept in each year's book. The New York Farm Bureau delegate body decided that the concerns posed by Mr. Zilke on this issue had merit and should be state policy.

The policy mentioned is number 60 on page 91 of our current state policy book and reads, "We support banning any balloons or Chinese lanterns if made with wire or metal or any other non-biodegradable material."

Are there any questions as to how this policy came about or regarding the support that put it into the 2025 New York Farm Bureau policy book?

Thank you for your time this morning to share with you this grassroots process of which we are very proud.

All New York Farm Bureau policies are available for your perusal on our website under Priority Issues of our Legislative Affairs.