

Op-Ed by Rep. Mike Bost (IL-12):

For the last half of the 20th century, no voice captured the essence of the American spirit better than Paul Harvey. It's been 15 years since his passing, and it's easy to forget that he reached 24 million Americans each week on the radio and in newspapers. But what drew people to Harvey wasn't just his humor or wit—it was his love of celebrating everyday heroes.

In November 1978, Harvey stood before the Future Farmers of America convention in Kansas City, Missouri, and delivered a speech that has echoed through the generations: "So God Made a Farmer." In that speech, Harvey did more than recount the creation story. He reminded us all that when God looked down on the world He'd made, He saw the need for a caretaker—someone to tend to the land, someone with patience and strength. And so, God made a farmer.

Harvey wasn't just sharing a perspective on faith; he was capturing the heart of what it means to be a farmer. These men and women are the backbone of our nation. That's especially true in Southern Illinois. They are the ones who rise before dawn, work through the heat and the cold, and face the challenges of unpredictable weather and fluctuating markets—all to feed and fuel America.

I've had the privilege of meeting many of these everyday heroes during my August agricultural tour across Southern Illinois. This tour wasn't just about making stops; it was about hearing directly from the people who keep our rural economy strong. From the row crop farmers in Evansville talking trade, to the livestock producers in Cisne focused on Farm Bill reforms, each conversation reaffirmed what I already knew: Southern Illinois is full of hardworking, dedicated individuals who embody the values that make America great.

Agriculture is not just an industry; it's a way of life. It's one of our district's largest employers, and it's easy for some to forget just how crucial this industry is to our daily lives. That's why events like this tour are so important—they highlight the vital role farming plays in our communities.

But supporting our farmers means more than just recognizing their work; it means ensuring they have the tools they need to succeed. That's why the Farm Bill is so essential. Over the past year and a half, I've been hitting the ground hard, both here at home and in Washington, to make sure Southern Illinois voices were loud and clear in the crafting of this legislation. I've traveled to each of the 34 counties in our district, spoken one-on-one with farmers, attended events, held roundtables, and even hosted

the Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee right here in Southern Illinois to hear straight from farmers themselves.

Throughout these meetings, I've heard time and again about the importance of the Farm Bill's safety nets, how it must ensure access to trade, and secure credit for beginning farmers. These aren't just policy points; they are lifelines for our farmers, helping them navigate the challenges they face every day. And I fought hard to secure these priorities in the Farm Bill, and more. I'm proud to be Southern Illinois' voice on the House Agriculture Committee, fighting for a Farm Bill that works for our farmers, growers, and producers.

You have to wonder if Paul Harvey, when he delivered his speech at that FFA convention back in 1978, knew just how impactful his words would be. In fact, his ode to the American farmer resonated so deeply, it was incorporated in a Super Bowl commercial 35 years later.

A lot has changed over the years, but one thing hasn't: we need our farmers—and they need us. They need us to empower them to provide the food, fuel, and fiber that keep America moving. I'm going to do all I can to make sure that happens.

And now you know the rest of the story.