

Cooperative Network: Passage of Assembly Bill 353 a 'win' for Wisconsin cooperatives

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MADISON, Wis. [November 8, 2017] – Cooperative Network applauds the bipartisan support delivered yesterday in both the Wisconsin State Assembly and Senate in the approval of Assembly Bill 353. The leadership of Representative Gary Tauchen (R – Bonduel) and Senator Patrick Testin (R – Stevens Point) was crucial in the success of this legislation.

Also known as the Cooperative Statute Modernization Bill, this legislation was drafted with the goal of providing the state statute that governs cooperatives, Chapter 185, with its first update in over 30 years.

“By voting in favor of this bill, our legislators have shown that they believe members of cooperatives and their elected boards should be trusted to make the right decisions for the future of their cooperatives,” says John Manske, Cooperative Network’s Senior Government Affairs Director.

The legislation was designed to provide member cooperatives with the freedom and flexibility to best serve their member-owners by allowing for outside director perspectives on a minority basis, an opportunity to consider patronage-based voting for the one cooperative holding company in the state and updates on the process

for notification of unclaimed capital, among other provisions.

“We are proud of what this legislation means for our members,” Manske says. “The provisions in the bill are optional and it would be up to individual cooperatives if they want to enact these policies. It is reassuring to see cooperatives being provided with the same opportunities for advancement and growth in their respective industries as other business models. This revision allows them to update structure and practice while staying true to the seven cooperative principles.”

Cooperative Network serves approximately 400 Wisconsin and Minnesota member-cooperatives by providing advocacy, education, public awareness, and development services to a wide variety of cooperatives including agricultural marketing and processing, credit unions, dairy, electric, Farm Credit, farm supply, health care, mutual insurance, housing, service, telecommunications, worker-owned cooperatives, and more. For more information about Cooperative Network, visit www.cooperativenetwork.coop.