

Gov. Walker: Attends Ag Day at the Capitol

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Madison – Governor Scott Walker spoke about his 2017-2019 Executive Budget Proposal, including transportation funding and support for nutrient management, today at “Ag Day at the Capitol” in Madison.

“Every year, agriculture contributes more than \$88 billion to Wisconsin’s economy,” Governor Walker said. “With over 68,700 farms, our agriculture sector provides 413,500 jobs annually, approximately 11.9 percent of the state’s employment. As we travel throughout Wisconsin, we consistently hear from farmers and other members of the agriculture community about the same concerns – an effective transportation system, and more effective ways to manage our land and water resources. Our biennial budget proposal addresses these issues and more to ensure Wisconsin’s agriculture tradition remains strong.”

Ag Day at the Capitol is the largest gathering of farmers across Wisconsin representing numerous farm groups. The event is intended to inform the state’s farmers about important policy issues and allow them the opportunity to meet with legislators.

Governor Walker’s 2017-2019 Biennial Budget includes the following proposals that will benefit Wisconsin’s rural and agricultural communities:

Rural Schools

Governor Walker’s budget proposal increases Sparsity Aid by \$20 million, bringing total investment in Sparsity Aid to \$55.4 million over the two-year budget. It also increases the per-pupil reimbursement rate for districts that previously qualified for

Sparsity Aid to \$400 per pupil.

Governor Walker's budget will create a new \$100 per pupil tier of Sparsity Aid funding for districts with 746-1000 pupils, which will provide greater stability for schools that fall just outside the 745 pupil requirement.

Provides 100 percent reimbursement for rural school districts in the High-Cost Transportation Aid program by investing \$25.4 million over the two-year budget. This is an increase of \$10.4 million over the last budget.

Provide \$92,000 over the two-year budget for pupil transportation as well as increase reimbursement rates for pupil transportation to \$365 for more than 12 miles, \$10 for two to five miles in summer school, and \$20 for more than five miles in summer school.

Increase funding for the Infrastructure Grant Program through Technology for Educational Achievement (TEACH) by \$22.5 million. This will allow more school districts to apply for grants for allowable costs under the Infrastructure Grant Program.

Tax Relief

Property taxes on a median-valued home will be lower in 2018 than they were in 2010 under the Governor's proposal. To drive them down further, Governor Walker's budget eliminates the state portion of the property tax bill. For the first time since 1931, there will be no state tax collected on your property tax bill under the Governor's proposal.

Governor Walker's budget fully implements the manufacturing and agriculture production tax credit.

Transportation Funding

Governor Walker's budget proposal provides the most funding ever to local governments for local roads.

\$1.705 billion for State Highway Rehabilitation, the most funding ever.

Total funding for all active major highway development projects is \$669.9 million over the biennium, alleviating delays to major projects.

At \$500 million, Governor Walker's budget proposal includes the lowest level of bonding since 2001-2003.

Nutrient Management

\$500,000 over the biennium for producer-led watershed grants.

\$1.65 million in funding over the biennium to fully fund demand for cost-sharing nonpoint source reduction projects and land and water conservation activities performed by the counties. Total funding for the program will be \$3.325 million, a

nearly 25 percent increase under Governor Walker's budget.

Additional \$7 million in bonding for grants to counties for land and water resource management plans.

Additional 4 full-time employees transferred to support water quality management activities, including the concentrated animal feeding operations program.

Agrichemical Management Fund

Governor Walker's budget proposal restructures the Agrichemical Management Fund and the Agricultural Chemical Cleanup Program to modernize the fee and license structure for pesticides, fertilizers, soil or plant additives, and inspections. Farmers and businesses will see a fee reduction of \$2 million per year. The budget proposal reduces the burden on the agricultural community by reducing fees for license and permit holders and providing opportunities for fee holidays when the fund balance in the program reaches a certain threshold.