

Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation: Joint Committee on Finance takes positive action on key ag items in budget

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MADISON – Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation is supportive of the latest votes from Joint Finance Committee members on Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) issues that impact farmers.

The Joint Committee on Finance resumed action on the state budget after a nearly 10-week delay to continue their work on the two-year, \$76 billion spending package. On August 24, two omnibus motions were adopted to complete work on the DATCP and environmental quality provisions within the DNR.

“The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation has been anxiously waiting for the completion of these two issue areas because these programs and funding impact farmers greatly,” said Paul Zimmerman, Executive Director of Governmental Relations. “After yesterday’s votes, we feel confident that this budget is a solid package for farmers across the state. Now, it just needs to cross the finish line.”

The Committee adopted the DATCP omnibus budget motion on a bi-partisan 16-0 vote. Some of the major provisions include:

- Continuation of the Farm to School program with funding for a school coordinator position and it retains the Farm to School Advisory Council.
- Adopts comprehensive changes in program structure, licenses and surcharges in the Agrichemical Management Fund (ACM) and the Agricultural Chemical Cleanup Program (ACCP) as developed by stakeholder groups during the last 18 months.
- Continues funding the livestock premise registration program with an additional \$100,000 annually.
- Increases aid to county fairs by \$25,000 for an annual appropriation of \$431,400.

“The fact that there was unanimous bi-partisan support for the DATCP package speaks to the importance and non-partisan nature of agriculture in this state,” said Zimmerman. “Wisconsin Farm Bureau wants to extend a thank you to all the members of the committee for their work.”

The committee also adopted an omnibus motion on a 12-4 vote to complete the environmental quality section of the DNR. Some key provisions of the package include:

- An increase of \$900,000 annually for county conservation staffing grants for total base funding of just over \$8.9 million a year.
- Provides an additional \$825,000 annually for soil and water resource management (nonpoint) grants.
- Maintains funding for the very popular producer-led watershed protection grant program and increases the maximum state match from \$20,000 per watershed to \$40,000.
- Provides funding to study the hydrology of certain water bodies designated in the high capacity well legislation passed earlier this year.
- Provides \$100,000 in grant money to design solutions to increase flow in the Little Plover River.

“Farm Bureau is committed to these conservation initiatives and we’re pleased the committee is as well,” said Zimmerman. “The county conservation staffing grants, nonpoint grants, producer-led watershed grants and the hydrology funding are all key provisions that will help farmers become more effective stewards of their lands.”

Made up of 61 county Farm Bureaus, the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation is the

state's largest general farm organization, representing farms of every commodity, size and management style.