

Wisconsin Legislature: Bill to make cheese Wisconsin's state dairy product passes committee

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Madison, WI - Cheese is one step closer to becoming Wisconsin's State Dairy Product. Assembly Bill 73 and Senate Bill 44, authored by Representative Todd Novak (Dodgeville) and Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) following a presentation by 4th graders at Mineral Point Elementary, has advanced through committee after a unanimous vote.

The bill was heard by the Assembly Committee on Agriculture and the Senate Committee on Government Operations, Technology, and Consumer Protection in a joint hearing on Thursday, March 23, 2017.

"There is a lot of value in teaching kids the importance of civil engagement," said Novak. "These students put in a lot of time and effort into researching their proposal. It has been a privilege to see it through to the next stage of the process."

Students Ella Kroll, Isabelle Coogan, Matthew Goninen and teacher Livia Doyle from Mineral Point Elementary spoke at the hearing in support of the bill.

"90% of the 30 billion pounds of milk our dairy cows produce each year is turned into cheese," said fourth grader Matthew Goninen. "That's a lot of cheese!" he added. Following Matthew's testimony, Sen. David Craig (Town of Vernon) asked why Wisconsin's State Dairy Product should be cheese and not custard. Thinking on

his feet, Matthew replied “Only 10% of the milk produced stays as milk and [only] some of that goes into making [custard]. The Senator acknowledged that Matthew had provided an impressive response.

“I was excited to hear that the entire class was able to make the trip to Madison to testify in front of a Joint Committee,” said Marklein. “The bill has gathered bipartisan support and I am optimistic that we may be able to pass it.”

“If their teachers approve, it would be great to have the class back to the Capitol to watch the full Senate or Assembly vote on the bill,” Novak added.

If the bill is passed by both the Senate and the Assembly, it will head to Governor Scott Walker’s desk to be signed into law.