

Gov. Evers: Fitzgerald, senate Republicans signal plans to fire Gov. Evers' agriculture secretary in midst of dairy crisis

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Senate Republicans poised to reject gubernatorial cabinet nominee for first time in modern Wisconsin history

MADISON — Sen. Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau) signaled Friday that Senate Republicans plan to fire Gov. Tony Evers' Dept. of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) nominee, Sec. Brad Pfaff, when the Wisconsin State Senate is expected to convene and take up his appointment on Tuesday this week. According to WisPolitics.com's reporting, records dating back to 1987 show no gubernatorial cabinet nominee has been rejected by the Wisconsin State Senate during that time, making Republicans' move completely unprecedented in modern Wisconsin history.

Senate Republicans' intent to reject DATCP Sec. Pfaff's nomination comes as Wisconsin's agriculture and dairy crises worsen and trade tensions at the federal level continue to escalate. Between July 2018 and July 2019, Wisconsin lead the nation in family-farm bankruptcies. In 2018, Wisconsin lost nearly 700 dairy farms—almost two a day. Republicans' anticipated vote to reject Sec. Pfaff's appointment would leave Wisconsin's leading agricultural agency without its head chief.

"It is astonishing that, in the middle of a dairy crisis and trade war, Republicans want to create even more uncertainty and instability by firing the leader of the agency charged with fighting for Wisconsin's farmers and rural communities," said Gov. Evers.

Senate Republicans' plan to reject Sec. Pfaff was unexpected as Sec. Pfaff was among the

first of Gov. Evers' secretaries to be recommended for approval when five Republicans and four Democrats on the [Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions](#) recommended Sec. Pfaff's confirmation [unanimously](#)—on a 9-0 vote—earlier this year.

Additionally, as Gov. Evers announced Sec. Pfaff's appointment last December, Sec. Pfaff received broad, public support from agriculture stakeholders, including Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation President Jim Holte who [said](#), "Brad is no stranger to the Wisconsin agricultural community. His rural roots give him a solid foundation to serve our farmers well in a stressed economic time... Brad will be a good advocate to help maintain the health of the industry and continue to build on what his predecessors established in resources for the agricultural community."

Groups registered in support of Sec. Pfaff's appointment also include:

- Wisconsin County Forests Association
- Wisconsin Corn Growers Association
- Wisconsin Agri-Business Association
- Wisconsin Dairy Products Association
- Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association
- Wisconsin Soybean Association
- Wisconsin Association of Professional Agricultural Consultants
- Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association
- Wisconsin Pork Association
- Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association
- Wisconsin State Cranberry Association

Given Sec. Pfaff's broad organizational support and committee recommendation, some have suggested Republicans' intent to reject his confirmation is retribution for [comments](#) Sec. Pfaff made earlier this summer. Sec. Pfaff made headlines when he released a statement challenging Republicans on the Legislature's powerful Joint Finance Committee to finally release \$100,000 for farmer's mental health assistance after they refused.