

Assembly Republicans considering two tax breaks to aid farmers

Posted on Wednesday, Feb 5, 2020

Speaker Robin Vos says Assembly Republicans are considering two tax breaks for farmers as they look for a more “robust” boost for the ag industry than what Gov. Tony Evers has proposed.

Vos, R-Rochester, said Assembly Republicans were looking at a combination of bills they’ve already introduced, new proposals and some of what Evers proposed last month in his State of the State address.

Still, he said the \$8.5 million price tag for Evers’ package was probably “too small of an effort” to make a significant difference for struggling farmers.

“We would prefer to be a little bolder in our actions,” Vos said.

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Evers welcomed Republican interest in the topic.

The new ideas from the Assembly include a variation of Vos’ previous call to allow farmers to deduct health insurance costs from their taxes. Vos said the idea would apply to all sole proprietorships, not just farmers, with a price tag of about \$9 million.

Assembly Republicans are also looking at a property tax cut that would benefit just farmers.

Vos said his caucus was still putting the final touches on both ideas. One potential hurdle: the uniformity clause in the Wisconsin Constitution generally prevents the Legislature and local officials from granting preferential treatment to certain property owners. But Vos said he believes the final proposal will meet those

standards.

He didn't have a cost for the proposed property tax break or the overall package.

Vos said it will be significantly bigger than what Evers proposed. But his caucus will meet Thursday to hammer out final details with the goal of having new bills introduced by the end of the week. It would be a series of legislation or one or two larger bills, he added, with the hope to have them on the floor Feb. 20.

Assembly Republicans have passed a series of proposals this session on topics such as homelessness only to see them run into resistance in the Senate GOP caucus over the price tag.

Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, said his caucus is "all ears" when it comes to plans to help farmers. Senate Org yesterday unanimously approved introducing the special session legislation that Evers requested.

"We're taking an all-the-above approach as a caucus and are continuing to review all the bills in front of us as we look to address the special session call," he said.

Evers said he's open to "all sorts of ideas" but would prefer more immediate help for farmers than tax credits that may take a while to collect.

Speaking after a Wisconsin Counties Association event, the gov said he was glad to see "all sides now have decided to get going on this particular issue."

"It seems to me that we've always worried about whether we propose something that they're going to complain about how much money we're spending," Evers said. "So, if they want to put more money into mental health issues or if they want to put more money into some other programs, have at it. I'm with them."

Watch the Assembly GOP news conference [here](#).