

Assembly Agriculture Committee: Passed bills that have potential to help Wisconsin agriculture

Posted on Tuesday, Feb 11, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MADISON – On Monday, February 10, multiple bills were introduced by the state assembly. The bills are part of a fast-moving package created to help farmers, rural Wisconsin and the state’s stressed agricultural economy. Today, these bills were passed out of the Assembly Ag Committee as a first step.

“As a general agriculture organization, we see a lot of potential in these bills,” said Wisconsin Farm Bureau President Joe Bragger. “We appreciate the attention that our legislators and our governor are directing toward rural Wisconsin. If we want our state to continue to prosper in agricultural commodities, we need the rubber to hit the road.”

Two of the bills brought forth by the state assembly originated from Gov. Tony Evers who requested a special session to address rural Wisconsin issues.

Assembly Bill 6 requires the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to achieve certain objectives related to Wisconsin’s agricultural product exports. It would establish a program through WEDC in conjunction with DATCP, with a purpose to increase dairy, meat and crop exports by the year 2026.

“Expanding export opportunities for our farmers is always a good thing,” said Bragger. “Our farmers are outstanding at what they do. Why not share our great products outside of our state and country?”

Under current law, DATCP promotes the growth of the dairy industry through

research, planning and assistance by making grants available to dairy processing plants operators and dairy farmers. Special Session Assembly Bill 7 would award grants to dairy processors but give preference to small plants.

“In order for our dairy community to succeed, we need the companies working with farmers to succeed,” said Bragger. “Giving preference to small processors helps those businesses that have less resources stay in business which ultimately strengthens our rural communities and our dairy farmers that ship them milk.”

In addition to the two amended governor’s bills, the state assembly introduced additional bills to help Wisconsin’s farmers.

Assembly Bill 874 would require the Board of Regents to direct a study that examines several facets of educational resources and challenges in current agricultural programs.

“We appreciate that the legislature is asking to look closer at these programs,” Bragger said. “Data is important for the agricultural community to understand where we are right now. This study can shape the direction we head next. Farmers understand that you need to constantly evaluate and improve what you are doing. The educational system that supports us should be no different.”

Assembly Bill 873 creates a refundable tax credit for property taxes paid on agricultural buildings and improvements.

“This bill in particular is very exciting to me,” said Bragger. “It takes action right away and puts actual dollars in the hands of our farmers. These dollars will go a long way to help our struggling farmers pay a feed bill, pay for an equipment repair or pay a milker for months. These dollars will be immediately recycled into Wisconsin’s rural economy.”

Assembly Bill 627 requires the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System to allocate \$1,000,000 in additional funding per year for state specialists providing extension services at the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences in the field of applied agricultural research.

“Wisconsin Farm Bureau supports this bill because these specialists perform and teach focused research that is essential to Wisconsin farmers and our agricultural economy,” said Bragger. “Since 1990, the number of Integrated Research

Specialists at UW-Madison College of Agriculture and Life Sciences has decreased by 45 percent. We need the research to guide our farmers in their commodity areas.”

Wisconsin Farm Bureau asks farmers and agriculturists to call or email their state senators and representatives and encourage them to support these bills.

“These bills are moving fast because it’s the end of the session,” said Bragger. “As farmers we have been thrown numerous challenges the last five years. We owe it to ourselves to help these bills, that are extra tools for us, to get across the finish line. Make time for the phone call or email to your representative. At the same time call your senator and tell them to watch for these bills to be coming their way soon. If there ever was a time for us to show off our grassroots power, its now.”