Dairy Business Association: Presents legislative leader awards

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MADISON, Wis. — The Dairy Business Association, Wisconsin's leading dairy advocacy group, presented several Wisconsin legislators with awards for their efforts on behalf of the state's signature industry at their annual Dairy Strong conference.

As an advocacy association, DBA works closely with policy-makers to carry DBA members' policy priorities from the farm to the capitol, working toward common sense solutions. Four lawmakers who champion dairy legislative solutions were recognized before nearly 500 attendees during the evening program for their efforts and partnership.

DBA's Director of Government Affairs Chad Zuleger presented the 2021-2022 DBA Legislative Champion Award to Sen. Joan Ballweg and Rep. Tony Kurtz and the Lifetime Achievement Award to former Representatives Don Vruwink and Gary Tauchen.

"Getting to work inside our state capitol is quite an experience," said Zuleger. "I have the honor of recognizing lawmakers who have significantly impacted DBA's policy and budget priorities."

The group presented the Legislative Champion Award to legislators with a significant impact and track record advancing DBA's policy and budget priorities. They are true dairy policy champions. Sen. Joan Ballweg represents the 14th Senate District in southern Wisconsin, serving as Chair of the Senate Agriculture and Tourism Committee and a member of the Joint Committee on Finance. Rep. Tony Kurtz represents the 50th Assembly District in southwestern Wisconsin and serves on the Joint Committee on Finance.

Sen. Ballweg and Rep. Kurtz both authored a bill establishing an Agriculture Export Program to increase agricultural commodities' exports by 25% by 2026. They champion accurate labeling of dairy products, funding and research initiatives through the UW-based Dairy Innovation Hub, enhancements to the producer-led watershed groups and water quality efforts that recognize farmers' efforts to implement on-farm sustainable practices. Sen. Ballweg and Rep. Kurtz are true friends of dairy with an open-door policy for ideas, concerns and support.

"We work with many in production agriculture both in the capitol and in my district," said Sen. Ballweg. "We must and will continue to be champions on behalf of dairy."

"We need to continue demonstrating how critical dairy and agriculture are for Wisconsin," said Rep. Kurtz.

DBA also presented a Lifetime Achievement Award, celebrating longtime friends to Wisconsin dairy and agriculture. Recipients demonstrate a significant portfolio of pro-dairy and agriculture policy throughout their careers and are considered true advocates and friends of Wisconsin dairy.

Former Rep. Don Vruwink served three terms representing the 43rd Assembly District and on the Assembly Agriculture Committee, Rural Development Committee and the 2018 Governor's Dairy Task Force 2.0. Former Rep. Gary Tauchen served eight terms representing the 6th Assembly District. Throughout his career, Gary served in many capacities: Director and Chairman of the Livestock Identification Consortium, vice-chair of Cooperative Resources International, chair of AgSource Cooperative Services, chair of the Agriculture Committee, Rural Affairs Committee chair and the Committee on Small Business Development chair.

"I will continue championing dairy as long as my health allows," said Vruwink.

Although unable to attend in person and accept his award, former Rep. Gary Tauchen communicated a message to the attendees.

"I hope DBA continues to support people with agriculture backgrounds," Tauchen said. "We need people who understand our issues to represent us on the local, state and federal levels. Change is constant. Stay dairy strong!"

Images:

[Senator Ballweg](#)

[Representative Kurtz](#)

[Former Representative Don Vruwink](#)

[DBA presenting awards to Ballweg, Kurtz](#)

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