

AG DAY AT THE CAPITOL

January 31, 2024

Presented by:  Wisconsin Farm Bureau[®] FEDERATION

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Farm Bureau Health Plans AB 860 / SB 811

- Today our top legislative priority is to pass a bill to allow WFBF to provide Farm Bureau Health Plans as a member benefit. Assembly Bill 860 and Senate Bill 811 would create a special exemption to allow WFBF to offer medically underwritten health plans that in the six states operating them today have provided savings of thirty to sixty percent compared to unsubsidized Affordable Care Act plans. These plans are not a solution for everyone, but for those they would help they can be a solution to let mom and dad farm full time and still access quality affordable coverage.
- The cost of health coverage has been a long-standing issue for farmers and WFBF has policy adopted by the membership supporting solutions for private, affordable, high-quality healthcare. While the Affordable Care Act has helped many who don't have employer sponsored plans find and access health coverage, because of the industry we are in and structure of our businesses, farmers remain in the same position they have been for decades; making a choice



between someone taking a job in town to access coverage or risking their chances being uninsured.

- The insurance committees in both the Assembly and Senate have heard the bills and we are hoping to see votes in both the Senate and Assembly soon. With the legislative session coming to an end, we need support from your Representatives and Senators to put these bills up for a vote and send the bill to Governor Evers' desk. Ask the legislators you support to support you and your neighbors having another option for affordable health care – support Farm Bureau Health Plans!

Key Legislative Initiatives

AB 137 / SB 139 – Establishing a Statewide Wolf Population Goal

In response to the Natural Resources Board adoption of an adaptive wolf population management plan in 2023, this legislation returns Wisconsin to the 1999 management goal of a wolf population of 350 wolves in Wisconsin. Considering the impact of wolf predation on livestock and agricultural activities, this legislation more appropriately emphasizes the need for a balanced approach that safeguards both the agricultural interests of farmers and the ecological integrity of the state.

AB 255 / SB 258 – Creating a Rural Pharmacy Incentive Program

This bill would establish a Rural Pharmacy Incentive Program aimed to encourage graduates from Wisconsin's three Schools of Pharmacy to serve in rural communities by providing an offset for the cost of higher education by committing to practice in rural communities over three years.

AB 258 / SB 226 – Authorizing Community Solar in Wisconsin

Farmers know the best economic use for their land. Allowing these small innovative Community Solar projects on 20-30 acres, which are compatible with farming operations, are a much better alternative to taking several thousand acres of quality farmland out of production. These projects could help relieve the tension between solar development and agriculture.

AB 274 / SB 271 – Establish a Commercial Driver Training Grant Program

Trucks are responsible for 83% of the agricultural freight movements by tonnage and 56% of agricultural freight ton-miles. It's estimated that nationally, 78,000 drivers are needed to meet the demand for moving goods in the U.S. This legislation has the opportunity to address this labor market gap by aiding with the cost of training to provide more slots for CDL students.

AB 331 / SB 269 – Wild Parsnip Eradication Grants

This bill aims to boost the collective efforts of state agencies, local governments, and conservation groups in combating the invasive weed Wild Parsnip. Allocating \$100,000 annually for a statewide grant program under the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Wild Parsnip, pervasive in ditches, yards, meadows and untended grasslands, poses a serious threat to native plants and pollinators. Its rapid growth needs more effective management.

AB 372 / SB 370 – Reestablishing the Farm and Industry Short Course at UW-River Falls

We strongly support the return of the University of Wisconsin's 138-year-old agricultural training program, the Farm & Industry Short Course. The 16-week residential program will now be hosted on UW-River Falls' campus in collaboration with UW-Madison and UW-Platteville. It is imperative that the Farm & Industry Short Course remain as an in-person and for-credit course to provide the future of Wisconsin's agricultural workforce the hands-on experience they need.

AB 419 / SB 409 – Creating a transparent and open Carbon Calculator

Farmers looking to benefit from participation in voluntary carbon markets may be at a disadvantage in Wisconsin. Differing proprietary formulas leave farmers without clear analysis whether they are getting the best price for carbon sequestration practices. This bill would mandate a transparent service available to Wisconsin farmers to access a webpage, obtain a carbon score and learn how to improve that score with a transparent and open process.

AB 440 / SB 431 – Overweight Dairy Product Hauling Configuration Permits

In just one year across Wisconsin, 35 billion pounds of milk moves from our state's 6,000 dairy farms to processing facilities, making an array of cheeses and dairy products. This bill will allow our dairy farms and producers to increase sustainability, helps address a truck driver labor shortage, improve public safety and increase competitiveness by authorizing heavier configurations for fluid milk products including liquid whey and whey by-products.

Key Legislative Initiatives

AB 455 / SB 454 – Infrastructure improvements for Higher Ethanol Blend Fuels

Fostering a greater transition towards cleaner and more sustainable American-grown fuels will create greater market opportunities for farmers in Wisconsin and throughout the Midwest. This bill requires that new retail or wholesale fueling facilities have the capacity to offer higher ethanol-blended motor fuels while also providing grants to upgrade existing facilities.

AB 480 / SB 468 – Preserving the Integrity of Farmland Preservation Tax Credits from Solar

Wisconsin law currently hosts a loophole where a landowner can claim a farmland preservation tax credit for land converted to solar, as long as it is less than 50% of their total owned acreage and meets certain FP criteria. This bill disallows individuals from claiming a Farmland Preservation tax credit for any part of their qualifying acres on which a solar energy generation facility is located that is not an integral part of or incidental to an agricultural use.

AB 555 / SB 544 – Labeling Requirements for Lab-Manufactured Proteins

Words like “meat” need to mean something. This legislation provides a necessary labeling requirement for lab-grown cell-cultured protein products. Plant-based derivatives like nut beverages or vegan meat-like substances use a recipe of plant ingredients to imitate the properties of traditional products. Laboratory manufactured proteins or cell-cultured grown proteins look to replace traditional natural meat while claiming it is an improvement upon nature and livestock agriculture.

AB 645 / SB 539 – County Assistance for Wisconsin Foods in Food Banks

Wisconsin’s agricultural landscape is integral to our state’s identity and well-being. Over the years, Wisconsin commodity and food processing organizations have collaborated with statewide foodbanks and local food pantries to provide Wisconsin grown food to those struggling with food insecurity. This bill enables County Boards to allocate funds to nonprofit organizations, specifically foodbanks and food pantries, operating within their respective counties to improve collaboration.

AB 655 / SB 619 – Establishing a Grazing Pilot Program

Wisconsin’s agricultural landscape presents significant potential for expanded managed grazing operations and interest in managed grazing from Wisconsin livestock farmers is growing. This bill would create a new program at DATCP to provide grant money and technical assistance to help farmers establish managed grazing systems for livestock.

AB 798 / SB 746 – Preserving Farm Liquid Propane Storage Tank Inspection Provisions

The legislation aims to correct an administrative ruling from July 2019 to specifically preserve special provisions on inspections for on farm aboveground fuel storage tanks. Under the proposed law, these tanks must register with DATCP for the purpose of informing local fire departments.

AB 822 / SB 828 – Allowing DACA Recipients to Obtain Professional Credentials from DATCP

The recurring theme of employers and professionals in the food processing space is that they are having difficulty filling credentialed positions for food safety inspectors and other DATCP Licensed professional positions. Currently, there are nearly 6,000 DACA Recipients that call Wisconsin home. Unfortunately, They are prohibited to receive these credentials due to immigration status. This legislation affirms a DACA recipients ability to get professional credentials from Wisconsin State Agencies.

AB 834 / SB 787 – Evansville Tax Increment Financing for Soybean Crush Facility

This legislation authorized the ability for the city of Evansville in Rock County to better align its tax increment financing portfolio for the future to make way for a state-of-the-art soybean crush facility.

AB 952 / SB 886 - Labeling a Food Product as a type of Milk

Wisconsin Farm Bureau has long supported the prohibition of commonly known and industry recognized food terms. Terms like “milk” should remain for dairy products. These products can often be purchased unintentionally by consumers looking for traditional products and stifle Wisconsin’s dairy industry.

Supporting Agricultural Autonomy and Food Security

AB 957 / SB 892 – Protect our Farms and AJR 98 / SJR 91 – Agricultural Autonomy Resolution

Concern is growing regarding laws, ordinances, and ballot initiatives that have been seen in other states finding their way to Wisconsin to restrict and dictate operational agricultural practices and protocols on farmers. The potential for laws like California’s Prop 12 proliferating in other states would have severe detrimental effects on food supplies, farms, and dinner tables.

- Assembly Bill 957 / Senate Bill 892, The Protect our Farms Act, provides protections from activist-driven local ordinances that attempt to dictate the protocols and procedures that farmers set to meet the needs of their farms.
- Assembly Joint Resolution 98 / Senate Joint Resolution 91 reaffirms the Wisconsin Legislature’s commitment to protect the autonomy of farmers in determining the best practices for their farms and acknowledging the damage that laws prohibiting the sale of agricultural goods can have on our nation’s food supply.

Consistency, both nationwide and statewide, matched with farmers’ privilege to set appropriate agricultural and livestock protocols, in consultation with their veterinarians, keeps Wisconsin agriculture at a competitive advantage for our unique and diverse commodity products.

Thank you!

Your Support strengthens Wisconsin Agriculture

Agricultural Road Improvement Program – Act 13

- Our top priority for the most recent state budget was the creation of the \$150 million Agricultural Road Improvement Program. We owe a huge thank you to our bill authors, Senators Marklein, Tomczyk and Ballweg, and Representatives Tranel and Vandermeer, the over 55 co-sponsors, legislators, and Governor Evers who've supported our efforts to fund this important program in the State Budget and pass corresponding legislation creating the program.
- We are now in the final stages of implementing the program at the Department of Transportation so they can start taking project applications next month.

Laws passed this session to support agriculture.

Act 42 – Farmland Preservation credit updates

- This legislation had been in the works for several years. We thank our bill authors Senator Testin and Representative Oldenburg for their dedication to this issue. This has been a very successful program but it was badly in need of the updates and increased credit amounts provided by this bill.

Act 5 – Producer Led Watershed Protection Grant Changes

- 2023 Wisconsin Act 5 expands eligibility for these grants by allowing the five agricultural producers to operate eligible farms in adjacent watersheds. We thank the bill's authors Senator Cowles and Representative Kitchens for the added flexibility to improve this great program.

Act 28 – Farm Service License Endorsements

- This new Wisconsin law extends the seasonal period for which an “F” endorsement may authorize this type of operation from 180 days in any calendar year to 210 days in any calendar year. We thank the bill's authors Senator Tomczyk and Representative Plumer for their leadership.

Act 32 – County Land Conservation Committee Members

- 2023 Wisconsin Act 32 removes the requirement to appoint one member to a county land conservation committee who is the county's FSA chair or the FSA chair's designee. Instead, the act requires a county board to appoint one member to the county's land conservation committee who is a person “engaged in an agricultural use.” We thank the bill's authors Senator Ballweg and Representative Schutt for bringing this legislation forward. The added flexibility will ensure that agriculture's voice will be heard and vacancies will be filled more quickly.



2023-25 Budget Items for Agriculture

The 2023-25 State Biennial Budget included historic investments in rural infrastructure and the many priorities of the agricultural community. We thank Governor Evers and the Legislature for their prioritization for agriculture.

- \$150 million for a new Agricultural Road Improvement Program.
- \$12.5 million to assess local bridges and culverts that are 20 feet or less in length.
- \$800,000 per year for meat processor grants.
- \$500,000 per year for grants to dairy processors.
- \$2 million for the Wisconsin Agricultural Export Promotion program
- Farmer mental health funding of \$100,000 per year.
- \$2 million for nitrogen optimization pilot program grants.
- \$70,000 per year for livestock premises registration.
- Additional \$50,000 per year for Wisconsin Agriculture in the Classroom Program.
- \$1.6 million for cover crop rebates.
- Maintained funding for producer-led watershed protection grants.
- \$22,176,500 in funding for county conservation departments.
- \$125 million to address PFAS contamination.
- \$1 million in 2024-25 for well compensation and well abandonment grants.
- \$6.5 million for rural nonpoint source water pollution abatement grants.
- \$200,000 per year for Targeted Runoff Management grants.
- \$3 million to help fund the Food and Farm Exploration Center in Plover.

THANK YOU for attending Ag Day at the Capitol. Your attendance strengthens the voice of Wisconsin agriculture.

A special thanks to the sponsors of Ag Day at the Capitol. Their support, promotion and attendance ensure that farmers are speaking with an informed, effective and unified voice.