



LEGISLATIVE update

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Information provided by Jordan Lamb, The Welch Group



Ag Groups Release 2023-25 Biennial Budget Priorities

At the end of January, The Wisconsin Ag Coalition, a group of commodity and agri-business trade associations who work together on state legislative issues, released its 2023-25 Biennial Budget White Paper identifying the programs and proposals that Wisconsin's agriculture and agri-business industry collectively supports in the next state budget bill. The Coalition supports initiatives related to producer-led conservation programs, rural economic development initiatives, funding for continued nonpoint source pollution reduction grants and staffing, support for biofuels promotion, and support for the creation of a voluntary carbon credit scoring program in Wisconsin. WCA is a part of the Ag Coalition and worked cooperatively with the Coalition on these joint biennial budget priorities.

Governor Evers Delivers Budget to Legislature – Proposes \$103 Billion Budget

On February 15, 2023, Governor Tony Evers delivered his budget address to a joint session of the legislature and released his proposed 2023-25 biennial budget bill. The Governor proposed an operating budget of \$103.8 billion over the next two fiscal years (2023-25), adding 816.55 additional full-time positions. His budget did include some key provisions for Wisconsin farmers including grants for water conservation programs, funding for producer-led watershed grants, continued funding for the nitrogen optimization grant program, additional funding for the Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium, and continued funding for the local commodity food purchasing program to purchases of Wisconsin commodities for Wisconsin's food banks.

WCA Files Comments on Proposed Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan

The Wisconsin DNR released a draft of the updated Wolf Management Plan for public review and comment. The WCA filed written comments on the proposed draft plan expressing several concerns including support for a numerical wolf population goal of 350, encouraging wolf only in areas of prime wolf habitat, requesting additional management tools for Wisconsin farmers and asking for DNR support for federal delisting of gray wolves in Wisconsin. Comments on the draft plan are now closed and the DNR has stated they are reviewing the comments and considering revisions to the final plan. Once final, the plan will be presented to the Natural Resources Board. The DNR has not disclosed a timeline for the review of the comments.

Two Key Races on the Ballot

There are two crucial races on the spring election ballot in Wisconsin – one seat on the Wisconsin Supreme Court and a special election for the vacated 8th Senate District (formerly held by Sen. Albert Darling R-River Hills). In the 8th Senate District, Republican State Representative Dan Knodl (Germantown) won the Republican primary. He will face Democrat attorney Jodi Habush Sinykin (Whitefish Bay) in the April election. The Supreme Court non-partisan primary winners were former Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Dan Kelly, a conservative, and Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Janet Protasiewicz, a liberal. The race drawing significant attention and importance because the next court is likely to issue key rulings on issues ranging from Wisconsin's 1849 abortion ban, legislative district maps, union rights, and election law issues.

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