

Legislative Update



Wisconsin's State Budget Process Begins

By Jordan Lamb, The Welch Group

Governor Evers presented his biennial budget package to a joint session of the Wisconsin State Legislature on February 18, 2025. Governor Evers' 2025-27 biennial budget proposal would spend \$118.9 billion in total state and federal revenue, which is an increase of 20.3% over the current state budget. The bill has been introduced as SB 45 and AB 50 and it will now be reviewed and amended first by the members of the Joint Committee on Finance.

Included in the Governor's budget proposal is \$80 million in total funding for farm, agribusiness and food programs. The Governor's proposal includes funding for farmer-led conservation programs at DATCP (i.e., the Producer-led Watershed Protection Grants, Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program grants and Cover Crop Insurance Premium Rebates; \$1.2 million for Dairy Processor Grants; \$1.6 million for Meat Processor Grants; \$400,000 to double funding for farmer mental health services; \$15 million to relaunch the PACE program (Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements) to purchase easements that protect farmland from being developed for any purpose other than agricultural use; and \$30 million in state funding for food bank commodity purchases. The Governor also proposed \$50 million in funding for Agricultural Road Improvement Program (ARIP) grants.

Prior to the Governor's release of his budget, the Wisconsin Agriculture Coalition, which includes the WCA, released its complete list of agricultural budget priorities for the 2025-27 budget bill. The number one priority for the Ag Coalition in this budget bill is securing \$150 million in funding to continue the critical ARIP program. The 2023-25 state budget invested \$150 million to create the nation's first agriculture-specific road funding program to upgrade local roads used to move over 15 million tons of agricultural goods annually. The Department of Transportation received nearly 300 applications totaling over \$500 million—more than triple the available funds – for the grant program. Given its success and the continued need, the Coalition strongly supports funding another round of \$150 million over the 2025-27 biennium to provide support to upgrade additional local agricultural roads across Wisconsin.

The Ag Coalition also supports including continued funding for Wisconsin's incredible successful farmer-led conservation programs; incentives to promote the sales and production of U.S.-produced biofuels; and funding to support increased availability of large animal veterinarians serving rural Wisconsin. To review the complete list of the Ag Coalition's budget priorities, go to https://wfbf.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/FINAL_2025-27-Budget-Priorities-Ag-Coalition.pdf.

Once the Joint Committee on Finance finishes reviewing and approving their version of the budget bill later this spring, it will go to the full Assembly and Senate for review. If passed by both houses of the legislature, the budget then goes back to Governor Evers for his final review. The goal is to complete this process before the end of the current fiscal year, which is June 30, 2025.