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Farmers Union responds to failed Farm Bill vote

The House version of the 2018 Farm Bill failed on the House floor today by a vote of 198 to 213. Wisconsin Farmers Union (WFU) opposed the bill as it was presented and stressed the need for a more partisan approach in the next draft.

WFU President Darin Von Ruden issued the following statement in response to the vote:

“A lot is at stake in this farm bill – farmers across the country are facing depressed commodity markets and, here in Wisconsin, we’re losing dairy farms at the rate of 1.5 per day. While it is important that we get safeguards in place to help these farmers, it’s also important that this next farm bill makes the substantive improvements that American farmers so desperately need to ensure a future for their farms.”

“This version of the bill was heavily partisan, rushed and likely to have given us more of the same,” Von Ruden added. “It would have weakened payment limitations, watered down definitions to allow subsidy loopholes, backtracked on farm program limitations, made excessive cuts to nutrition assistance and slashed \$1 billion from conservation programs. Farmers are looking to our political leaders to craft a bill that better supports family farms and rural Americans.”

Farmers Union is urging legislators to consider a number of improvements to the farm bill, including:

- Reinstating a more reasonable definition of “actively engaged in farming,” so that farm program support goes only to farmers.
- Tightening up farm program payment caps and payment limitations, so the Farm Bill is a safety net for average farmers.
- Reinstating the Market Stabilization feature that was originally intended to be part of the Margin Protection Program for Dairy, which would reduce the cost of the dairy program to taxpayers.
- Restoring conservation funding to protect soil and water resources.
- Focusing nutrition dollars on actually feeding people, especially children, rather than more red tape.

House Speaker Paul Ryan made a Motion to Reconsider that was postponed, so there might be a re-vote this afternoon or more likely next week. The U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee is still in process of working on its version of the Farm Bill.

Wisconsin Farmers Union, a member-driven organization, is committed to enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, rural communities, and all people through educational opportunities, cooperative endeavors, and civic engagement. For more information visit www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com.

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