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# HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

## Capitol Update

By Senator Howard Marklein

June 4, 2021

### **Budget Bulletin: Agriculture, Natural Resources, Workforce Development & Safety and Professional Services**

The Joint Committee on Finance (JFC) held an Executive Session on Agriculture, Natural Resources, Workforce Development and Safety and Professional Services on Wednesday, June 2, 2021. This session included decisions related to agriculture industry-support programs, user-fee funding programs, workforce development programs and several regulatory programs.

As you know, I represent one of the most ag-dependent senate districts in Wisconsin. Throughout the last year, I have been hearing from farmers and meat processors about the huge issues in our local meat supply chain. Most of our local meat processors are booked out to 2023 for slaughter. While business is good, it illustrates a need to increase inspectors, expand capacity and encourage new workers in this industry. In response, we approved four new State Meat Inspector positions. We also created a Meat Processor Grant program (\$400,000 over the biennium) for meat processors to apply for assistance to expand, equip, train, etc.

We also increased grants for Dairy Processors to \$400,000 each year of the biennium to encourage continued growth in this industry. The Ag Export program outlined in Assembly Bill 314, authored by Rep. Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc) is funded with about \$2 million over the biennium to expand the export of Wisconsin agricultural products around the world. Finally, we continue to prioritize the mental health needs of our farmers by investing in the Farmer Mental Health program, which we increased by \$100,000 per year.

The DNR collects a lot of funding through user fees via hunting, fishing, ATV/UTV licensing and more. We made several changes to these items, at the requests of the organizations that represent these outdoorsmen and women, so they can have a greater impact and expand programming. We increased the Waterfowl Stamp by \$5, from \$7 to \$12 which will enable organizations like Ducks Unlimited to continue making strong investments in habitat recovery.

We also expanded the funds available from ATV/UTV registrations to \$750,000 annually for local ATV and UTV trail and project aids. We are allowing user fees to be used for trail system, improved mapping, etc. We also increased funding for state ATV and UTV trail aids by \$250,000 annually and provided an additional \$200,000 annually for county snowmobile aids to fund leases for GIS tracking units. Finally, we increased expenditure authority for boating aids by \$380,600 annually to, again, apply user fees to enforcement and improvements. Again, all of these funds are generated by those who purchased licenses, pay fees and participate in the sport.

Workforce development is essential to continue our recovery. We provided an additional \$2 million for local youth apprenticeship grants and increased the award amount from \$900 to \$1,100 per student. We changed requirements for the Hire Heroes program to make more veterans eligible and expanded the Youth Summer Jobs program to communities beyond the City of Milwaukee. Finally, we provided \$25,000 to DWD to conduct a study on Wisconsin's unemployment insurance system to find ways to get more people back to work.

As you may remember, I have been working with local fire and EMS departments in the 17<sup>th</sup> District to improve recruitment and retention of volunteers. We made a strategic investment of \$100,000 today in the Youth Volunteer Firefighting/EMS program. This program is an investment in the future of firefighting and EMS. This grant program helps high school students become certified, while in high school, to help with recruitment and retention.

Overall, our budget action was thorough and strategic this week. Next week, we will be working on the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) and the Building Commission among others. I will update you next week!

As always, please do not hesitate to connect with me to provide input, ideas or to seek assistance. Send an email to [sen.marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:sen.marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov) or call 608-266-0703.