

The Maryland Farm Bureau Hotline

Legislative proposals that impact Maryland's farm community



Contact: Val Connelly or Kurt Fuchs
(410) 269-0656

No. 3 February 4, 2010

DATES TO REMEMBER...

Tuesday, February 9th - Maryland Farm Bureau Day in Annapolis

8:30am Briefing for farmers at the Calvert House

10:00am – MD General Assembly Session – Senate presentation to Miss Maryland Agriculture
Bring you Photo ID to gain access to the State House and other government buildings.

12 noon lunch at the Calvert House, 58 State Circle, Annapolis

Farm Bureau Members must register for the event in advance.

All members of the Maryland General Assembly have been invited to attend.

Bill hearings for the week of February 8th include:

Tuesday, February 9, 2010

SB 233 / HB 220 - Program Open Space - Local Agricultural Exposition Centers - Authorization

– Senator Glassman & Delegate James

Senate: *Education Health and Environmental Affairs, 2 West Miller on Tuesday at 1:00pm*

House: *Environmental Matters, 250 Lowe House Office Building on Wednesday at 1:00pm*

This bill allows each county and Baltimore City to construct an Agricultural Exposition Center on land acquired using Program Open Space Funds. An Ag Exposition Center includes a facility for agriculture-related entertainment, an agricultural services Center, a farmers' market and a livestock auction. Produce, livestock and other ag-related products may be sold at the facilities as long as they were produced within the county or the City. Maryland Farm Bureau supports an amendment to this bill that would potentially allow items produced outside of the county to be included in a livestock auction or other event at an Ag Expo Center. **MD FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 233 & HB 220 WITH AMENDMENT.**

HB 216 - State Highway Administration - Unauthorized Signs on Highway Rights-of-Way

- Delegate Pena-Melnyk

House: *Environmental Matters, 250 Lowe HOB at 1:00pm*

This bill elaborates on the authority to remove and collect certain civil penalties for removal of unauthorized signs within a state highway right-of-way. The State or local governing body that removed the sign may collect the costs of removal and seek an injunction against future violations in a civil action in District Court. Violators will be subject to up to a \$25 fine per sign and authorities will assume the violator to be that person or persons whose name, business, location, or merchandise is displayed on the sign. The administration, county, or municipal corporation may only enforce this provision with the issuance of a warning for the first 3 months after a sign removal program has been created. The administration, county, or municipal corporation may retain any fines/penalties they collect.

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Wednesday, February 10, 2010

SB 229 - Blue Ribbon Commission on Maryland Transportation Funding – Senator Garagiola
Senate: *Budget and Taxation, 3 West Miller SOB at 1:00pm*

This bill would establish the Blue Ribbon Commission on Maryland Transportation Funding to review, evaluate, and make recommendations generally related to funding of the transportation projects. This includes the sources and structure of the Transportation trust Fund, mass transit and highway construction, public-private partnership options, regional transportation authorities, impacts of economic development and smart growth on transportation funding, and long-term funding solutions for transportation. The 21-member commission is to be comprised of legislators, and the following appointed by the Governor: the secretaries of Transportation, Budget and Management, DBED, Planning; representatives of the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority; three reps from the business community two reps from the transit community; two reps in from the environmental community; one rep each from AAA, the freight rail industry, and the motor carrier industry; and 2 other individuals. An interim report is due by January 2011 with a final report due by January 2012. The commission will sunset on June 30, 2012. **FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

SB 396 - Maryland Estate Tax - Payment Deferral for Qualified Agricultural Property

– Senator Middleton Senate: *Budget and Taxation, 3 West Miller SOB at 1:00pm*

This bill allows for a 5-year deferral of estate taxes on agricultural property that continues to be used for agricultural purposes. The amount eligible for the deferral is calculated by dividing the total value of the agricultural property by the total value of the entire estate. Interest on the deferred portion of the estate may not accrue until the 5 years passes. If the property ceases to be used for agricultural purposes within the 5 years, the tax is due immediately. **MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 396.**

HB 220 - Program Open Space - Local Agricultural Exposition Centers - Authorization

– Delegate James House: *Environmental Matters, 250 Lowe House Office Building at 1:00pm*
(See explanation under SB 233 above.)

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 220 WITH AMENDMENT.

Thursday, February 11, 2010

HB 312 - Maryland Death Taxes - Family Property Protection Act – Delegate Krebs

House: *Ways and Means, 160 Lowe HOB at 1:00pm*

This bill recouples the state and federal estate tax calculation. In 2004, Maryland decoupled the tax calculation and codified a state estate tax exemption amount of \$1 million. The federal exemption in 2009 was \$3.5 million. In 2010 the federal estate tax is zero. Maryland Farm Bureau believes the estate tax should be eliminated completely at the state and federal level.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 312.

National Update

FBACT Request Issued on Spray Drift

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is seeking public comment of their draft Pesticide Registration (PR) Notice on Pesticide Drift Labeling. They have proposed to add a general spray drift statement that is vague and excessively broad and sets an unachievable zero drift standard. Preventing every molecule of a crop protection product from drifting is technically impossible and may open up farmers to enforcement actions and frivolous lawsuits. EPA is also seeking public comment on a petition

from the activist groups Earthjustice and Farmworker Justice to impose no spray zones or buffers, claiming that it would add additional protections for children. Individual comments or letters to EPA from farmers will be helpful in making sure EPA understands the full impact of its actions. Farm Bureau has issued an FBACT alert. This link contains key information to help our membership in their messaging when they contact EPA to express their concerns with this EPA's spray drift proposal. To access the FB ACT site click [here](#).

States Urged to Call Senators to Support Murkowski Resolution

AFBF is urging state Farm Bureaus to call their senators and sign on as co-sponsors to a resolution introduced by Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), legislation that would disapprove EPA's endangerment finding and consequent regulation of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act. Murkowski has already been joined by 40 other senators in supporting the resolution, which guarantees that it can come to the Senate floor for a vote. The measure needs just 51 votes to pass. "We are only 10 senators shy of passing a critically important resolution and putting the Senate on record opposing EPA's policy," said Rick Krause, AFBF senior director of congressional relations. "We need to do everything possible to increase support for this resolution, particularly among Democratic senators." You can reach Senator Mikulski at (202)224-4654 and Senator Cardin at (202)224-4524.

Obama Budget Calls for Significant Farm Program Cuts

The Obama administration released its fiscal year 2011 proposed budget Tuesday that calls for significant cuts to farm programs. The proposal calls for \$8 billion in cuts to crop insurance over 10 years and reduces both payment limits and adjusted gross income limits. Direct payment limits are reduced from \$40,000 to \$30,000, and the adjusted gross income (AGI) limits for both on-farm and off-farm incomes are decreased by \$250,000 (to \$250,000 off-farm and \$500,000 on-farm). The payment limit and adjusted gross income cap reductions save \$2.3 billion over 10 years. The payment limit and AGI limit changes would require re-opening the 2008 farm bill. Farm Bureau strongly opposes re-opening the farm bill. Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.), Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman and Collin Peterson (D-Minn.), House Agriculture Committee Chairman have both already expressed their unwillingness to re-open the farm bill. The budget proposal includes a variety of changes, but it is important to note that many of the changes would require legislative changes and cannot be implemented without such changes. It is also important to note that while the president proposes a budget for the year, it is ultimately Congress that passes the budget and appropriations legislation that direct discretionary spending.

Oppose H.R. 1549/S. 619, "The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act"

From the National Pork Producers Council - The "overuse of antibiotics administered on farms to livestock and the link to human antibiotic resistance" has become a hot issue in Congress in recent months. The PEW Commission, the Union of Concerned Scientists, celebrities, TV personalities and major media outlets have been spreading many misconceptions about this issue and the role farmers and pork producers play in this issue. Congress will be looking to pass "non controversial bills" this spring, and H.R. 1549/S. 619 fits that mold for many lawmakers that do not represent rural America.

Please contact your lawmakers on Capitol Hill and urge them not to support H.R. 1549/S. 619. Reiterate to them that there's no proof that antibiotic use on farms significantly increases resistant bacteria in humans and no indication that this legislation will slow the development of resistant bugs. Remind your lawmakers that what this legislation *will* do is harm pork producers and rural economies. Pork production costs will increase, food prices will increase, and there will be fewer pigs, meaning fewer jobs in rural areas should these bills pass.

Maryland Farm Bureau sent the following letter to Governor O'Malley this week:



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

8930 Liberty Road • Randallstown, MD 21133 • (410) 922-3426

February 2, 2010

The Honorable Martin O'Malley
Governor of Maryland
State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor O'Malley:

I am writing today on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Maryland Farm Bureau to express our concern over the Fiscal Year 2011 budget cut to the nutrient management program at the Maryland Department of Agriculture. The budget you submitted to the General Assembly cuts the program in half.

The nutrient management funding is used to contract with the University of Maryland Extension to hire certified consultants. These consultants work out of county Extension offices and write the nutrient management plans that farmers are mandated to have under the 1998 Water Quality Improvement Act. At the time the Act was passed, the General Assembly went as far as to write into the law that the state would provide sufficient funds to run the program.

We can assure you that with only \$500,000 in the nutrient management program, the number of consultants employed through county Extension offices will necessarily drop. In fact, the likely scenario is that there will only be 12-15 certified planners available through extension to serve all 23 counties. Thousands of farmers will be unable to get a nutrient management plan as envisioned by the legislators who passed the 1998 Act and told farmers the planners would be available.

As we have discussed with you on several occasions, Maryland's farmers are committed to doing our part to help clean up the Chesapeake Bay. Nutrient management plans are the basic building blocks upon which all other BMPs on farms are built. The nearly 100% compliance with the requirement to have and implement a nutrient management plan is one of the key numbers that will help Maryland reach the 2-year goal for Bay improvement. If that number slides backwards because of lack of planners, Maryland will not make its goal.

We would like to suggest that rather than committing an additional \$12 million in funding this year to the 2010 Bay Trust Fund to start new Bay improvement projects, you fund the existing nutrient management program at a level that will continue to ensure its success.

Sincerely,

PATRICIA LANGENFELDER
President

cc. Members of the Maryland General Assembly