

The Maryland Farm Bureau Hotline

Legislative proposals that impact Maryland's farm community



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Action Request: State and County Agricultural Fair Funds at Risk

The House and Senate budget committees are making decisions over the weekend and through the beginning of next week on the state budget for Fiscal Year 2011. One of several budget items of concern to the farm community is the proposal to cut \$2.1 million in Special Funds that are used by the Maryland Agricultural Fair Board to promote State and county agricultural fairs and exhibits. The Special Fund annual grant program also benefits the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF), the Maryland Million, the Maryland State Fair, LEAD Maryland and several local jurisdictions.

The Special Funds are accumulated each year from the horse racing industry in the form of daily licensee fees, pari-mutuel taxes, uncashed pari-mutuel tickets and permits fees. Under current law, there are 8 primary distributions made under the Special Fund, the largest of which is \$825,000 to the MD Agricultural Fair Board. MAEF receives \$75,000 and the Great Frederick Fair receives \$40,000 to support harness racing. Funds remaining after the 8 primary distributions are allocated to the Maryland-Bred Race Fund (up to \$300,000 annually) and the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund or MAERDAF (up to \$260,000 annually).

The budget as originally proposed by the Governor would have cut \$602,800 from the Special Fund program. This cut would have impacted grants to local jurisdictions, not the agricultural fair funding. Each year after the Governor proposes the budget, analysts from the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) comb through the document and recommend additional cuts to the House and Senate Committees. The proposal to cut all of the Special Fund was made by the budget analyst during a hearing last week.

Maryland Farm Bureau opposes the DLS cut to the Special Fund because of the significant negative impact it would have on the county fairs and their ability to support important education programs through the FFA and 4-H shows in rural communities. We also oppose the loss of critical funds for the Maryland State Fair, MAEF's ag education efforts in schools across the state and the LEAD Maryland rural leadership training program.

Take Action Now: Maryland Farm Bureau members are urged to contact their Delegates and Senators to ask them to help protect the Ag Fair Board funding. Members can call 1-800-492-7122 and ask to be connected to their legislator or log onto <http://mlis.state.md.us/mgaweb/mail32.aspx> and click on the down arrow to locate your legislator to send an email.

Contact should also be made with the following members of the House and Senate Subcommittees that will be making the decision over the next week. **Urge them to oppose the DLS cut to the Horse Racing Special Fund and to support funding for our fairs and ag education programs.**

Senate Capital Budget Subcommittee

James DeGrange, Chair, x3593
Nathaniel McFadden, Vice Chair, x3165
Ulysses Currie, x3127
George Edwards, x3565
Edward Kasemeyer, x3653
Nancy King, x3686
Rona Kramer, x3625
Donald Munson, x3609
Douglas J.J. Peters, x3631

House Transportation & Environment Subcommittee

Tawanna Gaines, Chair, x3058
Murray Levy, Vice Chair, x3325
Susan Aumann, x3258
Wendell Beitzel, x3435
Talmadge Branch, x3398
William Bronrott, x3642

The following bills are scheduled for hearing the week of March 15th:

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

HB 1169 - Agricultural Energy Production Act of 2010 – Delegate Bartlett

House: *Economic Matters, 230 House Office Building at 1:00pm*

This bill alters the state’s net energy metering law to allow the use of meter aggregation when determining eligible customer-generator credits. “Meter aggregation” is defined as the combination of readings from, and billing for, all meters, without regard to rate class, on properties, leased, and operated by an eligible customer generator, for properties located within the services territory of an electric company. Meter aggregation includes hardwired aggregation to a single meter or virtually through the company’s billing system. The bill would allow for a customer-generator to use physical meter aggregation for net metering of agricultural properties or virtual meter aggregation for agricultural properties that are located within 2 miles of the boundaries of the customer-generator’s premises and within a single electric company’s service territory.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 1169.

SB 746 - Natural Resources - Land Acquisition - Notification and Approval – Senator Colburn

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

This bill would require the Department of Natural Resources to notify at least 45 days in advance the county or counties in which a property being brought before the Board of Public Works for purchase by the State when the purchase prices exceeds \$2 million. Currently, such notification must only be provided to the Senate Budget and Tax and the House Appropriations Committees. It also would prohibit the State from acquiring a tract of land in Dorchester County of over 100 acres for preservation of open space unless the County Council of Dorchester County approves the purchase. This last requirement currently only applies to Allegany County.

DORCHESTER COUNTY FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 746.

SB 859 - Agriculture - Commercial Feed - Arsenic Prohibition – Senator Pinsky

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

This bill would prohibit a person from using, selling or distributing for use or sale within the state any commercial feed intended for use as poultry feed that contains Roxarsonone or any other additive that contains arsenic. Maryland Farm Bureau opposes this bill because it is not supported by science and because food additives and livestock feed additives should continue to be regulated at the national level. It is our understanding that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration does not support premise of this bill.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU OPPOSES SB 859.

HB 1070 - Farmer's Markets - Sale of Poultry and Rabbits – Delegate Shank

House: *Health and Government Operations, 240 House Office Building at 1:00pm*

This bill allows producers to sell poultry or rabbit products at a Farmer's Market without a license if the product sold is exempt under USDA meat inspection regulations. The bill defines poultry or rabbit products as the whole carcass of poultry or rabbit that was raised in accordance with the Maryland Wholesome Meat Act and that is owned by and has been raised, slaughtered and processed by the seller.
MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 1070.

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

SB 566 - Alcoholic Beverages - Direct Wine Shipper's License – Senator Raskin

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

This bill would create a direct wine shipper's license enabling the shipment of wine to persons in Maryland and to be issued by the office of the Comptroller. The bill would allow certain qualifying out-of-state entities to ship wine in addition to in-state businesses which would include holders of Class 3 and Class 4 Wine manufacturer's licenses. The permit fee is \$100 and a shipper must file with the Comptroller on a monthly basis. The bill establishes reporting requirements and sets a limit of 24 nine-liter cases of wine annually shipped by a permit holder to any given individual.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 566.

HB 858 - Montgomery County - Leghold or Body-Gripping Traps - Prohibition MC 16-10 –

Montgomery County Delegation

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

This bill removes the exception in Montgomery County that allows the use of steel jaw leghold traps on farmland. Under current law Montgomery County farmers experiencing crop, livestock, or property damage as a result of nuisance wildlife are exempted from the prohibition, as is the Department of Natural Resources in exercising wildlife control.

MD FARM BUREAU & MONTGOMERY COUNTY FARM BUREAU OPPOSE HB 858.

HB 851 - Talbot County - Deer Hunting on Private Property - Sundays – Talbot County Delegation

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

This bill would expand the number of Sundays open to deer hunting on private lands in Talbot County with a bow to include the last 3 Sundays of October and the second Sunday in November.

TALBOT COUNTY FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 851.

Thursday, March 18, 2010

SB 912 - Farmer's Markets - Sale of Poultry and Rabbits – Senator Brinkely

Senate: *Finance, 3 East Miller SOB at 1:00pm*

This bill allows producers to sell poultry or rabbit products at a Farmer's Market without a license if the product sold is exempt under USDA meat inspection regulations. The bill defines poultry or rabbit products as the whole carcass of poultry or rabbit that was raised in accordance with the Maryland Wholesome Meat Act and that is owned by and has been raised, slaughtered and processed by the seller.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 912.

Additional Information

New Initiatives and Revised Regulations to Help Farmers with Environmental Requirements and Storm Clean-up - Governor Martin O'Malley announced yesterday a number of new initiatives to help farmers meet environmental requirements and recover from the historic snow storms in February. The announcement followed a meeting on Monday with the Eastern Shore Delegation, Governor O'Malley, Environment Secretary Shari T. Wilson and MDA Secretary Buddy Hance.

Regarding storm clean up, Secretary Wilson has extended the deadline for the burning of poultry houses, other livestock shelters and manure storage structures that suffered structural collapse during the heavy snowstorms of February 2010, subject to conditions that protect the environment and public health. The new deadline is April 18. Storm recovery resources, including guidelines for burning, are on the MDA website at www.mda.state.md.us

MDA will also lead new "rapid response teams" as a result of the Eastern Shore Delegation's concern about new CAFO regulations from Department of the Environment (MDE) & EPA. These teams will quickly focus existing resources on evaluating and resolving possible on-farm environmental issues. This will benefit farmers who are confronted with the uncertainty associated with the delays that sometimes happen between the time a possible environmental issue is brought to light and the time of environmental sampling, reporting of results and taking action to resolve the issue if one is determined to exist. These teams will reinforce the existing MDA-MDE partnership to jointly respond to water quality complaints on farms. Regional MDA staff will be available to address water quality concerns related agricultural operations and situations that have potential environmental impact. MDA will lead the response team, visiting the site, evaluating conditions and making initial determinations. Local soil conservation districts will be available to provide additional technical assistance where a problem is identified. Financial assistance may be available to help offset the cost to the farmer of installing best management practices needed to address problems.

"Don't Cap Our Future" Goes to the Hill

The American Farm Bureau Federation's six-month campaign to oppose cap-and-trade climate change legislation, "Don't CAP Our Future," culminated Wednesday when farmer and rancher members from across the country presented key lawmakers with some of the 100,000 grassroots calls to action gathered in opposition to the issue.

"Cap-and-trade provisions would create an energy shortage and ultimately reduce food production. That was the driving force behind the 'Don't CAP Our Future' campaign," AFBF President Bob Stallman said at the Capitol Hill event.

Stallman, members of the AFBF board and additional state Farm Bureau presidents and members, warmly thanked members of Congress attending the event who have shown outstanding leadership in the battle against cap-and-trade legislation.

"On behalf of the American Farm Bureau Federation board of directors, please accept my sincere appreciation," Stallman said. "Thank you for your support of America's farmers and ranchers and for your recognition of both the challenges that they face and their important contributions to our nation."