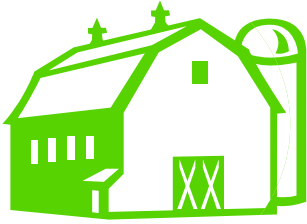


# The Maryland Farm Bureau Hotline

*Legislative proposals that impact Maryland's farm community*



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

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This will be the last weekly edition of the *Hotline* for the 2010 General Assembly session. Beginning next week, committees will announce their hearing schedules on a daily basis. Most of the hearings will cover bills that have already been heard in their house of origination and have crossed over to the opposite chamber. Most of the remaining bill hearings will be “sponsor only,” which means the public may not provide oral testimony but may file written testimony. If you are following a bill and want more information or an update on its progress, please call us in the Annapolis office or log onto the General Assembly website at [www.mlis.state.md.us](http://www.mlis.state.md.us). You will receive the *Final Hotline* soon after the April 12<sup>th</sup> close of the Maryland General Assembly.

The following bills are scheduled for hearing the week of March 22<sup>nd</sup>:

Tuesday, March 23, 2010

## **SB 960 - Property Tax Exemption - Farm or Agricultural Property Subject to an Easement** –

Senator Brinkley Senate: *Budget & Taxation, 3 West Miller Senate Office Building at 1:00pm*

This bill exempts agricultural property under a permanent land preservation easement from the state property tax. The permanent easement programs acceptable under the bill are the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, the Maryland Environmental Trust, and the Rural Legacy Board.

Currently, property used for agricultural purposes is valued at a maximum of \$500 per acre for tax assessment purposes. The state property tax rate is \$0.112 per \$100 of assessment.

**MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 960.**

## **HB 420 - Secretary of Agriculture - Mosquito Control - Enforcement Authority**

– by request of MDA - *Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs, 2 West Miller at 1:00pm*

This bill gives the Maryland Secretary of Agriculture new enforcement authority for mosquito control. If the Secretary, after consulting the local health authority, finds that a person is causing or allowing mosquitoes to breed or develop on any property in a manner that may pose a threat to public health, the Secretary may order that the person abate the mosquito habitat in a manner and at a time specified in the order. The bill gives the Secretary to authority to seek injunctive relief for failure to obey the abatement order. Failure to obey can lead to a misdemeanor conviction and a fine of up to \$5,000. As originally drafted, the bill would have authorized the Secretary to enter on and inspect private property (excluding a dwelling), after making reasonable attempts to contact the property owner and/or tenant. The right-of-entry provision, which was opposed by MFB, was amended out in the House.

**MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 420 AS AMENDED.**

**HB 421 - Department of Agriculture - Advertising Agricultural Products as Locally Grown - Regulatory Authority** – By request of MDA

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

This bill authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to adopt standards to regulate the use of the terms “locally grown” and “local” to advertise or identify an agricultural product. The bill is intended to promote and support local farmers and encourage retailers to use products grown in and near Maryland to meet consumer demand for local produce. The actual definition would be determined through meetings with local growers and other stakeholders during the regulatory process. The bill was amended in the House to require the Secretary to consult with representatives from retailers, restaurants and agriculture before proposing regulations. **MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 421.**

**SB 978 - Talbot County - Deer Hunting on Private Property - Sundays** – Senator Colburn

Senate: *Education, Health and Environmental Affairs, 2 West Miller SOB 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 SB 978.**

**HB 885 - Video Lottery Terminal Revenues - School Construction and Improvement**

– Delegate Simmons - House: *Ways and Means, 130 House Office Building at 1:00pm*

This bill repeals the Purse Dedication Account in the video lottery terminal (slots) law. Instead of allocating 7% of the proceeds from slots to the horse racing promotion fund, the bill re-allocates the funds for public school construction. **MARYLAND FARM BUREAU OPPOSES HB 885.**

<b>National Update</b>
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**Ag Groups Oppose Proposed Farm Safety Net Cuts**

The American Farm Bureau Federation joined 34 other agriculture groups in a letter sent Tuesday to the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Budget Committee expressing opposition to President Barack Obama’s proposed farm safety net cuts. In part the letter noted, “While we agree that reducing the deficit is necessary, we do not believe America’s farmers and ranchers should have to bear a disproportionate burden of the cuts. Notably, the farm safety net cuts included in the president’s budget appear to be proposed not for the purpose of deficit reduction but, rather, to offset the cost of spending increases contained elsewhere in the USDA budget. All told, the president’s budget proposal for USDA actually increases total outlays by more than \$4 billion.” In the meantime, Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.), ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), a senior member of the committee, wrote to President Obama opposing budget cuts to farm programs in a tough economy. The letter was also signed by Sens. Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), John Thune (R-S.D.), James Risch (R-Idaho), Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas) and David Vitter (R-La.).

**Levin Seeks to Retroactively Reinstate Estate Tax**

House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Sandy Levin (D-Mich.) says his panel would begin work to retroactively reinstate a federal tax on estates that expired Dec. 31. The legislation likely would seek an extension of 2009’s 45 percent tax rate on the value of estates that exceeded \$3.5 million per individual (\$7 million for married couples). Farm Bureau does not support a permanent \$3.5 million per person exemption or a 45 percent top rate. Farm Bureau supports permanent repeal of the estate tax. Until estate taxes can be repealed, Farm Bureau urges Congress to continue to work for meaningful estate tax reform by enacting an estate tax exemption of \$10 million indexed for inflation, continuing the stepped-up basis and removing the limits on the amount of farmland that can be valued for farm use rather than at development value.