

Farm Bureau Members To Meet Lawmakers

CAMP HILL (Cumberland Co.) — Approximately 400 members of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau (Farm Bureau) will meet in Harrisburg on Monday, March 25, with state lawmakers on priority concerns affecting agriculture. Topping the list of issues will be property rights protection, local tax reform, and roadside litter.

The meeting will be part of Farm Bureau's annual Harrisburg Legislative Tour. Members of county farm bureau legislative committees will be meeting face-to-face with their state representatives and senators to voice their concerns and recommend solutions to problems facing the farming community. The recommendations will be based on grassroots policy developed by the statewide farm group. Farm Bureau is a non-governmental, voluntary organization which represents 25,851 members.

Here's a summary of the recommendations Farm Bureau leaders will be making to their legislators:

•Property rights protection. Farm Bureau is urging passage of Senate Bill 805 currently in the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee. The bill would make government responsible for the impact of its agencies on private property rights. The

bill would establish guidelines for state agencies to follow in evaluating the effect of proposed regulations or regulatory actions on property rights. Public benefit would be weighed against property rights when actions limit property use. Landowners would be compensated for actions resulting in regulatory "taking" of their property rights under the Constitution and would be able to sue for compensation for any regulation or regulatory action causing more than a 10 percent property value reduction.

•Local tax reform. Farm Bureau is urging passage of Senate Bill 2, which has passed the Senate and is now in the House Finance Committee. Farmers carry a disproportionate share of the local tax burden because of limitations on local taxing authority which have made property taxes the primary source for increasing revenues. S.B. 2 would give counties, municipali-

ties, and school districts the option to replace real estate and nuisance tax revenues with a personal income tax. Municipalities and school districts could use an earned income tax instead. Counties could impose a sales tax instead of an income tax but would have to share one-half of it with municipalities and school districts. Voter approval would be required in order for local governments switching their tax system to increase property taxes.

•Roadside litter. Farm Bureau supports legislation such as Senate Bill 241 which would allow a state referendum for voter to express their wishes on returnable container deposits. The bill is in the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee. Littered cans and bottles continue to plague Pennsylvania farmers, causing work delays, damage to equipment, and injury to farm animals. Pennsylvania's mandatory

recycling law has not provided any relief for farmers. The issue has been brought to the General Assembly many times over the past several years without success and several beverage container deposit bills are currently under consideration. Farm Bureau believes an alternative approach may provide the solution. S.B. 241 would provide a non-binding statewide referendum on the question of whether Pennsylvania should enact "bottle bill" legislation. By doing so, it would allow the people to express their wishes and provide guidance to the General Assembly in future consideration of the issue.

Other legislation farmers will be discussing with their lawmakers during Farm Bureau's Harrisburg Tour include H.B. 200 to balance state wetlands regulations with individual property rights, S.B. 1432 to update the state's regulations for animal disease

control, and a package of bills S.B. 1404, 1405, and 1406 to improve financial protection for farmers selling products to a dealer, raising agricultural products under contract, or storing products with a dealer.

Furthermore, Farm Bureau members will be expressing support for a proposal to create an agricultural registration plate for automobiles and light trucks and for legislation, H.B. 2216, to make further reforms in the workers' compensation system. Legislation to include mushroom composting in the exemption from state air pollution regulations, H.B. 873, is also being supported.

In addition, farmers on the Harrisburg Tour will express the need to restore budget funding Gov. Ridge has proposed cutting at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine.

The Harrisburg Tour will conclude with a banquet address by Pennsylvania Farm Bureau president Keith Eckel beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the Ramada Inn on Market Square, Harrisburg.

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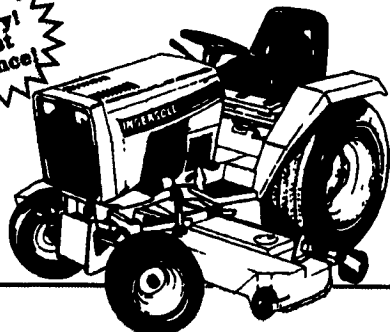
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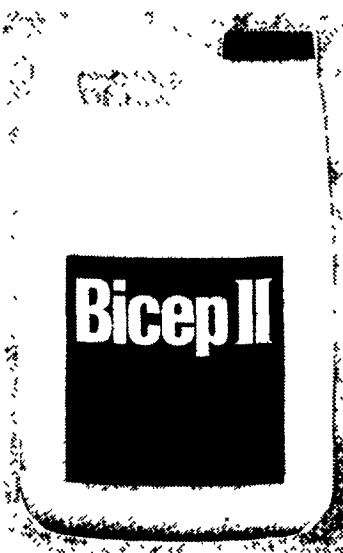
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