



Governor Walker announces 2017-19 biennial budget

Governor Walker delivered his biennial budget proposal to the legislature with a speech highlighting key provisions. The next step will be expected hearings by the legislature's Joint Finance Committee on the extensive blueprint (AB 64/SB 30) for the state for the next



Gov. Walker

two years. Among the provisions in the budget are the following:

- Ends the state portion of the property tax levy. A sum sufficient appropriation will be established to ensure continued funding for forestry programs equal to the amount that the state levied property tax would have generated.
- Provides increased assistance to rural schools through greater sparsity and transportation aid.
- Increases funding for the Broadband Expansion Grant Program by \$13 million.
- Cuts individual income taxes by reducing the tax imposed on the first \$37,450 of taxable income for married-joint filers and the first \$28,900 for single filers.
- Restore and strengthen the Homestead Credit to its original intent by providing support to seniors and the disabled.
- Transition to a self-insured group health model beginning on Jan. 1, 2018 for covered state employees. Depending on what study of the cost is believed, this could either save the state money or cost the state money.

- Authorizes \$500 million in new bonds for state highways, administrative facilities, harbor improvement and freight rail. However, the \$12 million identified for the freight rail rehabilitation program would be a significant decrease from the amount authorized during the current biennium and in prior biennia.

- Revise the agrichemical management (ACM) and Agricultural Chemical Cleanup Program (ACCP) fund to better balance program revenues and expenditures, simplify surcharges on pesticide registration, substantially reduce pass-through fees to farmers, extend ACCP coverage to "greenfield" agrichemical sites and lift lifetime site ACCP reimbursement from \$400,000 to \$650,000.

- Direct the DATCP and DNR to conduct a study on the feasibility of transferring the permitting process for concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) from the DNR to DATCP.

- Transfer four positions from other natural resources activities to support water quality management activities, including additional support for the CAFO program.

- Expand the use of environmental improvement funds for additional water quality activities, to redirect more resources towards areas of sensitive surface and groundwater, aimed at making resources available for water permitting and oversight activities.

- Continue funding of \$250,000 per year for producer-led watershed grants.

- Provide an additional \$7 million in general obligation bonds for grants to counties for land and water resource management plans.

- Eliminate the stray voltage program administered by the Public Service Commission and DATCP, with a reduction of one employee to the commission and five employees to DATCP.

Cooperative Network joins Personal Property Tax coalition

Cooperative Network has joined the Personal Property Tax (PPT) coalition, aimed at doing away with the personal property tax in Wisconsin.

This is a tax imposed on "tangible" personal property, such as equipment and furniture owned by a business. The legislature has exempted much property over the years, and imposition of the tax varies from local jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Items still subject to the tax after the more than 50 exemptions that have been approved include coolers, safes, sound and intercom equipment, surveillance equipment, signs, store fixtures, time clocks, restaurant and bar equipment, etc.

Cooperative Network's Farm Supply Committee passed a motion last year in support of the effort to remove the personal property tax from Wisconsin law.

Land O'Lakes Legislative Day at the Capitol held Jan. 31

Attendees at the annual Land O'Lakes Legislative Day on Jan. 31 visited 24 legislative offices as part of the event. The priority issues they discussed with legislators and legislative staff included anticipated high-capacity well legislation and proposals concerning the agrichemical management/agricultural chemical cleanup program, agricultural producer security program and WisDOT's fluid milk program.

Attendees heard from a legislative panel consisting of Rep. Lee Nerison (R-Westby), Rep. Gary Tauchen (R-Bonduel), Rep. Don Vruwink (D-Milton), Sen. Janis Ringhand (D-Evansville) and Sen. Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point). Panelists addressing current water quality and quantity issues included the WDNR's Russ Rasmussen, DeWitt Ross & Stevens attorney Jordan Lamb, Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation's Paul Zimmerman and Rep. Gary Tauchen. The WDNR's Eric Lobner addressed his agency's strategic alignment project. The transportation funding topic was covered by Rep.



Legislative visits are an essential part of grassroots advocacy and a key highlight at the annual Land O'Lakes Day at the Capitol. Pictured are (from left to right): Jeremy Natzke, Nic Schoenberger, Peter Kappelman and Sen. Frank Lasee.

Keith Ripp (R-Lodi), Transportation Development Association of Wisconsin's Craig Thompson and Wisconsin Counties Association's Dan Bahr. Jeff Lyon, Deputy

Secretary of DATCP, addressed the attendees on DATCP activities and priorities. Cooperative Network also provided staff briefings to begin the one-day event.

Dairy Legislative and Regulatory Committee elects officers

The Dairy Legislative and Regulatory Committee met Feb. 6 at the Madison office of Farm First Dairy Cooperative.

Members elected Paul Humphrey of Foremost Farms USA as chairman and David Cooper of Farm First Dairy

Cooperative as Vice Chairman.

Members heard from State Rep. Gary Tauchen (R-Bonduel) and DATCP's Steve Ingham, Peter Haase, Jeremy McPherson and Sara Walling. The next meeting of the committee will be June 21.

Legislature convenes with new Senators and Representatives

The 2017-18 Legislature convened Jan. 3 with four new State Senators and 11 new State Representatives for this term.

The new Senators are: Dave Craig (R-Big Bend), Dan Feyen (R-Fond du Lac), LaTonya Johnson (D-Milwaukee) and Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point). Craig and Johnson previously served in the State Assembly.

The new Representatives are: Jimmy Anderson (D-Fitchburg), David Crowley (D-Milwaukee), Jason Fields (D-Milwaukee), Treig Pronschinske (R-Mondovi), Pat Snyder (R-Wausau), Rob Stafsholt (R-New Richmond), Rob Summerfield (R-Bloomer),

Ron Tusler (R-Appleton), Don Vruwink (D-Milton), Chuck Wichgers (R-Muskego), and Shannon Zimmerman (R-River Falls). Fields had served previously in the State Assembly. Cooperative Network government affairs staff is scheduling get-acquainted meetings with new legislators. Members are encouraged to also reach out to the new members of the legislature.

Laura Gutierrez appointed Department of Safety & Professional Services Secretary

On Feb. 10 Governor Walker announced the appointment of Laura Gutierrez to serve as the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Safety and

Professional Services (DSPS). The appointment is effective Feb. 16, 2017. Gutierrez replaces interim Secretary Eric Esser. Esser had previously been Deputy Secretary with former DSPS Secretary Dave Ross. Ross was appointed WisDOT Secretary early this year.

Applicants sought for State FSA Committee

Applicants are currently being sought for the State FSA Committee. Interested candidates may submit a resume and cover letter to Sen. Johnson's office at tony_kurtz@ronjohnson.senate.gov. The deadline for applications is March 1. For more information about the position, email tony_kurtz@ronjohnson.senate.gov.