

NJ Farm Bureau
Legislative Priorities
2016-2017 Legislative Session

What follows is a synopsis of the legislative items Farm Bureau is following at the outset of the new 2016-2017 legislative session. Check back often as this document will be updated to reflect bill reintroductions, the introduction of new bills and any voting action on the bills listed herein.

- **S-969: Open space/farmland preservation funding (Smith, Bateman):** Despite strong support by the legislature, Governor Christie "pocket vetoed" the legislation supported by Farm Bureau to disburse corporate business tax (CBT) revenues among the land acquisition programs at the end of the last legislative session. Renewed efforts on this critically-important topic are already underway. The Senate Environment Committee approved S-969 at its first hearing of the new two-year legislative session. It was passed by both the Senate and the Assembly. The bill received a conditional veto from Governor Christie that was returned to the Senate. **The Bills were substituted by S2456/A4017 and was signed by the Governor on June 30th.** The bill leaves 60% of the available funding for Green acres, 31% for Farmland, 5% for Historic preservation and 4% for Blue acres program.
- **Estate/Inheritance tax relief A-11/S-2411:** The chorus of calls for estate/inheritance tax relief is growing within the legislature. It has emerged as a bipartisan issue. As part of the transportation trust fund funding proposal (gas tax increase) the elimination of the estate tax during a 5 year phase out of the tax **A-10/S-2412** make changes to the Environmental Infrastructure Trust and creates the Transportation Trust Fund account within the EIT.
- **Gasoline Tax, TTF funding A-12:** the assembly and Governor agreed to an alternative funding proposal for the Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) their proposal would lower the sales tax by 1% over the next two years to 6% they drop amending the estate tax and increase the gas tax to 23 cents same as the senate bill does. This proposal when implemented would create a \$1.6 billion shortfall in the states general revenue sales tax is one of the major funding lines in the state budget. **No agreement on proposals were reached by the end of the budget year so this will be a major legislative priority the next few weeks.**
- **A-15/S-15 Increases the Minimum wage:** the bill increases the minimum wage to \$15.00 plus CPI over the next five years beginning with an initial increase to \$10.10 an hour in 2017 after talk of amendments to factor in youth wages, seasonal and agricultural workers the bills passed both houses the vote in the Assembly was 42-31-1 and the Senate 21-18 the bill now sits on the Governor's Desk for an expected Veto or Conditional Veto.
- **Minimum wage relief for farm employers:** There were two proposals (A467/S101 the bill calls for relief for farm businesses affected by the minimum wage increase by permitting a tax credit for farm businesses constructing or rehabbing labor housing.

- **S-799; A-1446: Paid sick leave (Weinberg, Lampitt)** Farm Bureau continues to oppose the legislation to mandate that all employers provide their employees with earn sick-leave. Amendments were approved to S-799 in March that would exempt employers with fewer than 10 employees. The bill is on second reading in the senate. A1446 is different as it has a different standard of sick time for fewer than 10 employees and permits local ordinances to be more permissive than the state law.
- **SCR-1/ACR1: Casino expansion into Northern New Jersey (Sarfo, Sweeney)** The proposal to seek voter approval in November, 2016, for the expansion of gaming into northern New Jersey includes specific language to dedicate a minimum of 2% of the revenues generated by these two new gaming facilities for the state's horseracing industry. The resolution was approved by the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee on Thursday, January 14th and by the Senate on March 14th and the Assembly the same day by a vote of 54-17-3 and was subsequently filed with the Secretary of State and will be on the ballot this Nov.
- **S-238: Requires labeling of foods containing genetically modified material (Singer, Vitale)** Farm Bureau continues to oppose any state-specific labeling mandate for food productions containing genetically-modified material on the basis that such a mandate would increase costs for farmers, food processors, retailers and consumers and carry with it undue stigmatization of these plant varieties that have routinely been deemed materially-equivalent to their non-GMO alternatives. The legislation has been reintroduced on the Senate-side in the new legislative session. There has been no recent activity with the bill since its introduction in January. Farm Bureau will monitor any activity.
- **Sales tax for equine boarding arrangements:** Legislation was introduced in the last session to clarify that equine boarding operations are exempt from remitting sales taxes for stall rentals. NJFB will pursue reintroduction of this legislation in the new legislative session, and recognizes that this issue is a top priority for equine operations throughout the state.
- **S-2034/A-1775S-768/A-1505: Establishes a forest stewardship program for state-owned lands (Smith)** The legislation to require a forest stewardship program for all state-owned lands to promote forest health and mitigate risks of wildfire and other forms of forest degradation has been reintroduced in the current legislative session. Farm Bureau supports this legislative and will encourage favorable action in the upcoming legislative session. There has been no activity concerning this bill since its introduction in January.
- **A-1696/S-2000: Authorizes prescribed burning under certain circumstances (Dancer, Conaway, Caride/Beach)** Farm Bureau continues to support the legislative initiative to enhance protections for private landowners conducting "prescribed burning" activities. This practice, widely-employed in the Pinelands and other heavily-forested parts of the states, limits wildfire risk through the deployment of controlled burning activities. It has been reintroduced in the new legislative session. There has been to activity concerning this bill since its introduction in January.
- **Wildlife management bill package:** Farm Bureau will continue to pursue its wildlife management bill package in the new legislative session. This package includes several prominent items from Farm Bureau's wildlife policy. Specifically:

- The first bill would require state and local entities purchasing land, whether as preserved farmland or open space, to prepare a wildlife management plan for the parcel. SADC and DEP/Fish & Wildlife would be charged with preparing template wildlife management plans, and state/local entities acquiring land would have to implement a plan that's in conformance with the template as a condition of receiving public money to acquire the property.
- The second bill would authorize a biennial increase in the number of wild turkey hunting permits upon review/recommendation by the Fish & Council.
- The third bill would clarify that noise cannons are an allowable, non-lethal tool for wildlife control on farmland. This bill was introduced to the Assembly Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee in January but has no activity since its introduction.
- The fourth bill requires the Fish & Game Council to establish a summer bow hunting season for cultivated lands.
- A-784/S-1595: The fifth and final bill (creates a multi-species depredation permit option for farmers. A-784 was introduced and referred to the Assembly Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. S-1595 was introduced in the Senate and referred to the Senate Economic Growth Committee. Neither bill has seen any activity since their introductions in January and February.

Some of the bills have been reintroduced while others await formal reintroduction. Farm Bureau will continue to advocate for action on each of these bills in the new legislative session.

- **A-427/S-55A-2122/S-687: Bear/deer baiting bill (Lesniak/Gusciora)** Farm Bureau continues to oppose the legislation to prohibit baiting for bear or deer in areas of the state identified by DEP as "bear habitat areas" and to require the use of bear-resistant trash receptacles in these same areas. Baiting can be an essential feature of a farmer's wildlife management protocols, and some farmers additionally sell excess produce as bait for supplemental income. It is also unclear how these "bear habitat areas" would be identified. If broad criteria are used, this legislation could effectively eliminate baiting in vast swaths of the state. The bill has been reintroduced in the current legislative session. Both bills were introduced in January and were referred to the corresponding committee. Since being referred, there has been no activity on either bills.
- **A-1629/S-1754: Provides counties and municipalities with additional discretion when leasing public land for agricultural or horticultural use (Rodriguez-Gregg):** This legislation seeks to address certain concerns about farmland/open space lease agreements for municipal/county owned parcels. It has been reintroduced in the new legislative on the Assembly side. The Senate companion was reintroduced in March. Neither bill has seen activity since their reintroduction.
- **A-397/S-1521: The "Safe Playing Fields Act"; restricts use of lawn care pesticides at child care centers and certain schools, playgrounds, and recreational fields (Benson, Schepisi)** This legislation, reintroduced in the Assembly in the new legislative session, would prohibit the use of lawn care pesticides at child care centers, schools, playgrounds and other recreational fields. The companion bill was introduced to the Senate in February. Farm Bureau has significant concerns about the current language and will work with its colleagues from the Nursery and

Landscape Association and Green Industry Council to continue making its concerns known to the bill's sponsors.

- **A-696: Raw milk (DiMaio, Peterson, Giblin)** The legislation to permit the sale of raw milk under certain conditions has been reintroduced in the new legislative session. Farm Bureau policy continues to support the permissibility of raw milk sales in New Jersey, provided that adequate safety and testing standards are in place. There has been no action on the bill since its reintroduction in January.

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