

2012 legislative items

Feb. 3, 2012

S-1085 Establishes a forest harvest program on state owned lands Smith; This would require the state to develop and implement forest stewardship plans and permit the private sector to bid on the wood products for harvest in exchange for implementing the plans. We supported last year and the bill failed in the assembly mostly because of the McKeon thing but was not helped by the divided envro battle over it. The bill was first heard on Jan 30th with the commitment of the sponsor to have the bill moved Marched 8th.

A-518/S-279 Permits the sale of raw milk DiMaio, Wagner, Wilson, McHose, Diegnan, Giblin/ Turner; This is the bill that Dimaio amended last year to address the Farm Bureau's concern about a role for the department of health. It lines up with our policy and should be supported. The bill is posted for the first meeting of the Assembly Ag Committee on Feb 2nd

A-2039/S-928 Revises animal cruelty statutes increasing level of crimes and fees and penalties Milam, Albano/ VanDrew; The bill incorporates the Department of Agriculture's livestock care standards but falls short of updating some outdated sections of current law. The bill moved from the Assembly Ag Committee on Feb 2nd with the agreement of the sponsor's to work out additional changes and corrections before bringing it to the full Assembly.

S-589 Revises certain provisions of the farmland Assessment law Beck, Sweeney; The bill on line looks like the original bill from last year and the one the committee took testimony on last fall. This could move at any time once agreement on amendments has been reached. Smith said it will come up this spring.

S-3/A-2126 Increases the minimum wage to \$8.50 an hour Sweeney, Codey/ Oliver, Greenwald, Green, Johnson, Prieto, Wisniewski; bill would increase the minimum wage starting July 1, 2012, it leaves in place the exemption from overtime for agricultural work but permits an annual increase tied to the consumer price index. This will have a huge impact to our larger labor users in agriculture and finding ways to reduce those impacts will be a part of our discussions with legislative leadership.

A-323 Permits agricultural tourism activities on preserved farms Dancer, Riley, McHose, Milam; The bill pre-filed is the original Dancer bill from last year, includes everything on preserved farms. Will have to see if they go back to the committee amended version that make weddings and music fests and things like that events and permitted them differently from hayrides and pick your own activities.

A-932 Concerns permits and letters of exemption for agricultural activities in a wetlands Riley, Chivukula; The published version of the bill is the assembly passed version of the bill from last session. This is the one we would want.

A-498 Re-established historic driving privileges under agricultural driver's licenses Albano, Milam, Amadeo, DiMaio, McHose, Riley; The bill removes the restrictions on needing to have someone 21 and older in the car. May need some amendments to address the new standards added last session but we should be ok with those.

S-1143 Safe Playing Fields Act Turner; the bill prohibits the use of pesticides and chemicals on playgrounds and athletic fields parks and daycare centers. This is the version of the bill we did not support last session. There is supposed to be a bill introduced on the assembly side that would require the use of IPM programs at daycare centers and on playgrounds that is more in line with our policy on responsible chemical use.

These are the most active bills end of last session and the ones at least the first four where we have active sponsor participation on. There are a bunch of winery and brewery bills by Riley, I think we want to pursue the one from last year that simplified the small brewery licenses and that would address the farm brewery licensing needs that bill has not been reintroduced yet.

There are other bills such as, allowing for alternative voting members on the CADB, A-1054 Bramnick, Chiusano, McHose.

There are 20+ Animal cruelty bills, and changing the SPCA by Van Drew, Albano, and others is a concern, that we will continue to track but it seems that A-2039/S-928 is the main bill of focus for now. The bill we supported last year has not been pre-filed for introduction but the removal of Ag from the livestock care and standards is something we need to watch out for.

Then there are the renewable energy topic bills by Smith and Chivukla, that would advance the use of renewable energy, and systems and amend tax codes and everything... so nothing hot happening yet but may come up as they progress thru their agendas.