



# Legislative Update

February 10, 2023

🎵 Woah, we're halfway there 🎵 This week the 2023 legislative session is officially past the halfway mark.

The Farm Bureau had a hand in a lot of legislation this week, this was particularly true on Monday as we testified before the Senate Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Committee in support of [H.B. 187, Veterinary Practice Amendments](#) (Rep. Kohler), which would allow for non-veterinarian pregnancy checking of bovines. Despite compelling testimony from many witnesses in support of the bill, the Committee ultimately voted 2-5-1 to not move the bill forward. Some members of the Committee expressed concern about the impact this legislation could have on attracting veterinarians to rural Utah and that it would undermine Utah State University's efforts to stand up its College of Veterinary Medicine. The Farm Bureau is actively working with the sponsor and the committee to negotiate a compromise that would allow the bill to move forward.



At the same hearing, we also testified in support of [H.B. 184 Veterinarian Education Loan Repayment Program](#) (Rep. Albrecht). This bill establishes a Veterinarian Education Loan Repayment Program within UDAF. The bill would provide up to \$100,000 in student loan repayment to a veterinarian who practices for at least five years in an area of Utah with a USDA recognized veterinary shortage. This is an important bill for agriculture in Utah and we were happy to see the bill favorably reported.

Finally, the Farm Bureau also expressed concern regarding [S.B. 59, Beehive Requirements](#) (Sen. Kennedy). This bill would remove the longstanding requirement that beehives in the State of Utah be equipped with movable frames. Following the hearing, Farm Bureau met with Senator Kennedy and the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) to discuss our opposition to the bill. Senator Kennedy was willing to work with Farm Bureau and UDAF to address our concerns, and we are optimistic that a substitute will be passed that would allow for UDAF to consider approval of novel hive designs without

completely removing the movable frame requirement. You can rewatch the hearing and listen to our testimony [here](#).

On Tuesday, Farm Bureau testified before the House Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Committee in support of [H.B. 208, Criminal Trespass Amendments](#) (Rep. Chew). This bill will enhance property rights by establishing the elements of and penalty for criminal trespass on private property for recreational purposes. We also testified in support of [S.B. 53, Groundwater Use Amendments](#) (Sen. Vickers). This bill will help enhance our state's water storage capacity by clarifying that artificial recharge of a groundwater basin is considered a beneficial use. You can rewatch the hearing and listen to our testimony [here](#).

On Wednesday, we were on hand to watch the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environmental Quality Appropriations Subcommittee release its Funding Request Prioritization list. You can view the rankings of the funding requests [here](#). Although this is the Subcommittee recommendation, this list and corresponding amounts are not final. The Farm Bureau will be working diligently to ensure that priority funding requests are appropriated. Priority projects include: the Grazing Improvement Program (GIP); Agricultural Water Optimization; the LeRay McAllister Critical Lands Conservation Fund; HB0184-Veterinarian Education Loan Repayment Program; Soil Health Equipment Grants; the Utah FFA Association; and Agriculture Voluntary Incentives Program Funds. Additionally, we are monitoring a funding request before the Higher Education Appropriation Subcommittee for the Agriculture and Small Business Innovation/Sustainability Initiative. You can view the Higher Education Subcommittee's prioritization list [here](#).

On Thursday, Farm Bureau testified on [H.B. 307, Utah Water Ways](#) (Rep. Musselman). This bill would establish a new nonprofit, statewide partnership to be called Utah Water Ways. The partnership will facilitate and coordinate efforts to optimize use of water. This bill adds business engagement as a complement to the activities of various state agencies. The Farm Bureau requested that the bill be amended to require that one of the four members of the business community selected for the board be from a general farm organization. We will be working with the sponsors to add an amendment on the Senate Floor. You can rewatch the hearing [here](#).



(Photo Credit: Warren Peterson)

Additionally, on Thursday we were excited to witness, [H.B. 114, Animal Theft Defense Amendments](#) (Rep. Albrecht) pass the Senate. This bill will now head to Governor Cox. This is a huge win for agriculture. This bill will protect the property rights of farmers and ranchers, protect animal health and farm biosecurity, and deter future livestock theft.

Earlier today we testified in support of [H.B. 257, Greenbelt Property Amendments](#) (Rep. Kyle). This bill requires a county or commission to waive the acreage requirement for the Farmland Assessment Act (Greenbelt) if the assessed property fails to meet the acreage requirement because of a governmental entity exercising eminent domain or threatening eminent domain. This is a good bill that will protect agriculture producers from having to pay rollback taxes resulting from governmental action that they had no control over. You can watch our testimony [here](#).

We are also excited to announce that [H.B. 33, Water Related Liability Amendments](#) (Rep. Albrecht) passed the Senate by a vote of 23-0-6 and will now head to the governor for his signature. The bill will ensure that water facility owners and operators are not held liable for damage or injury caused by the diversion or discharge of water or another substance into the water facility by a third party, any other act or omission of a third party that is beyond the control of the owner or operator, or an act of God, including fire, earthquake, storm, flash floods, or similar natural occurrences.

As a reminder, we are regularly updating our [legislative tracker](#) under the policy section of our website ([UtahFarmBureau.org](#)), which provides further details for each specific bill. We also encourage you to read through the [2023 Utah Farm Bureau Policy Book](#) which can also be found under the policy section of our website. We would also like to remind you about Farm Bureau ‘Day on the Hill’ on Friday, February 24. A more detailed agenda will be sent out soon.

We encourage you to actively communicate with our policy team with questions or comments on topics of concern.

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