



Legislative Update

February 20, 2023

We just wrapped up week 5 of the 2023 Utah legislative session. As we hosted the NBA All-Star activities this past weekend here in Utah, our Young Farmer and Rancher all-stars were in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. The group was able to meet with congressional staff and met personally with Senator Mitt Romney to share Farm Bureau's priorities for the 118th Congress. They also presented Senator Romney with his 'Friend of Farm Bureau' award for the 117th Congress. The 'Friend of Farm Bureau' award is presented jointly by State Farm Bureaus and the American Farm Bureau, based on votes from Congressional members on issues of importance to Farm Bureau.



On Monday, Farm Bureau joined the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food to testify in support of [H.B. 371, Working Farm and Ranch Protection Fund](#) (Rep. Snider). This bill renames the LeRay McAllister Critical Land Conservation Program as the Working Farm and Ranch Protection Fund. The bill also requires that counties deposit 20% of rollback tax funds into an account set aside for preserving or restoring open land and agricultural land. The bill provides that rollback funding may not be used to purchase property in public land counties (counties in which over 50% of the land area is publicly), unless the governmental entity purchasing the property transfers to private ownership property, in the same county, that is roughly equivalent in size to the property to be purchased. The bill was favorably reported and passed the House on Thursday.

Later in the afternoon Farm Bureau testified in support of [S.B. 113, Local Agricultural Amendments](#) (Sen. Sandall). This bill protects agriculture in the state by prohibiting a municipality or a county from adopting or enforcing an ordinance or other regulation that prohibits or effectively prohibits the operation of an animal enterprise or the use of a working animal. This bill was favorably reported and passed the House on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, the Farm Bureau testified before the Senate Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Committee regarding [H.B. 187, Veterinary Practice Amendments](#) (Rep. Kohler). The Committee heard the bill for a second time after voting to hold it previously. The bill, as introduced, would have allowed for non-veterinarian pregnancy checking of bovines. Despite our best efforts, the Committee only agreed to favorably report the bill if those seeking to conduct pregnancy checking for hire have achieved a master's degree or higher in animal reproductive physiology and have completed at least eight hours of continuing education in animal reproductive physiology in the past two years. While we were disappointed by the Committee's ultimate decision on the bill, the amended bill is still an improvement over the status quo and will allow some non-veterinarians to fill gaps in rural Utah.

At the same hearing, Farm Bureau also testified in support of [H.B. 150, Emergency Water Shortages Amendments](#) (Rep. Albrecht). This bill establishes a defined process for a water user to exercise preference-of-use during a temporary water shortage emergency. This bill protects farmers and ranchers by setting up a framework for an interrupted water user to receive fair compensation from the preferential water user. The bill sets a high bar for this process to be used by requiring a "temporary water shortage" declaration by the governor with review by the legislature. The *Deseret News* published an article on the bill that you can read by clicking [here](#). Farm Bureau has worked very hard to craft this bill, and we are excited to see it move to the final steps of legislative process.

As a reminder, we are regularly updating our [legislative tracker](#) under the policy section of our website ([UtahFarmBureau.org](#)), which provides further details on specific bills. We would also like to remind you about **Farm Bureau 'Day on the Hill' this coming Friday, February 24.** You can view the agenda for the day by visiting our website or clicking [here](#).

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

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