The 2024 Utah Legislature General Session ends on Friday. So far, the legislature has passed 269 bills, but that number will climb significantly over the next few days. The Legislature has introduced 862 bills in total. We look forward to meeting in your counties over the next few months to discuss what passed, what might be coming back next session, and what our priorities should be over the interim sessions.

We appreciate so many of you joining us for our annual Farm Bureau Day on the Hill last Friday. Our group was fortunate to hear from Sen. Heidi Balderree, Sen. Scott Sandall, Sen. Derrin Owens, Rep. Tom Peterson, Rep. Scott Chew, Rep. Carl Albrecht, Rep. Rex Shipp, and Congressman John Curtis (UT-03). Rep. Peterson also provided a nice recognition for our members on the House Floor. You can rewatch the House Floor recognition by clicking here. We were pleased to invite many of our agricultural partners to join us in the Rotunda and we had a huge tractor out in front of the Capitol that was generously provided by Stotz Equipment. Many legislators came through the Rotunda, met with our members, and received boutonnieres and corsages from FFA students. Thank you to everyone who made our ‘Day on the Hill’ a huge success.

Although Friday was mostly devoted to our ‘Day on the Hill’ events, we testified in the late afternoon against H.B. 549, Product Disclosure Requirements (Rep. Trevor Lee). This bill requires that meat products that come from an animal vaccinated with an mRNA vaccine or that are produced by cultivating or culturing animal cells in vitro carry a label stating that they are a genetically modified meat product. This misleading and scientifically inaccurate labeling requirement would needlessly stigmatize a valuable tool in protecting animal health and potentially devalue Utah agricultural products.
A Utah-specific labeling requirement may also dissuade food manufacturers from shipping products into our state. Additionally, the State of Utah would have to invest significant amounts of resources into enforcement. We were pleased that the House Health and Human Services Committee voted to hold the bill and move to the next item on the agenda.

On Monday, the House concurred with the Senate amendment to H.B. 31, Agricultural Tourism Amendments (Rep. Carl Albrecht), which means the bill will now head to Governor Cox’s desk to be signed into law. This bill, written by Utah Farm Bureau with input from policy issue research committee members and the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, makes important improvements to Utah’s existing agritourism statute. Specifically, the bill adds agritourism to Utah’s ‘Right to Farm’ statute, clarifies that an agricultural tourism operation may be included in an agricultural protection area, strengthens liability protections for certain inherent risks, creates standard warning sign requirements, and establishes a voluntary registry maintained by the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food.

Finally, also on Monday, we testified before the Senate Business and Labor Committee in opposition to S.B. 269, Farming Equipment Amendments (Sen. Jen Plumb). This bill requires a manufacturer of agricultural equipment to provide to the owner of the equipment or an unaffiliated repair provider, access to certain data, software, software updates, and parts to allow the owner or unaffiliated repair provider to perform repairs on the equipment. The bill also requires manufacturers to provide equipment parts at “fair and reasonable terms and costs.” Other states are introducing similar “right to repair” legislation, though only one state, Colorado, currently has a “right to repair” statute specific to agricultural equipment. Utah Farm Bureau supports our farmers and ranchers being able to repair their own equipment, but we disagree with the approach of this bill and the current need for legislation.

Recently, the American Farm Bureau Federation entered into memorandums of understanding with five of the largest agricultural equipment manufacturers (John Deere, Case IH, CLAAS, AGCO, and Kubota). These MOUs set parameters for addressing issues between farmers and manufacturers and create a mechanism to address farmers’ concerns if a resolution is not achieved. Via a simple portal on the American Farm Bureau website, any farmer unable to resolve an issue directly with their dealer can provide feedback regarding any manufacturer with a signed MOU. The MOUs also provide for a semi-annual check-in period, so if the American Farm Bureau receives complaints from our members about any violation of any terms of the MOUs, those complaints are raised with the manufacturer during these meetings. Utah Farm Bureau believes that market-based solutions are most effective in these circumstances. We don’t support having a fragmented system of “right to repair” legislation across the country that manufacturers must navigate. We were pleased that the Senate Business and Labor Committee voted down the bill on a 3-2 vote. If you want to learn more about Farm Bureau’s involvement in these manufacturer MOUs, visit the AFBF website (https://www.fb.org/topic/mou). You can also search MOU and the manufacturer you’re interested in to read the specific MOU.

As always, we welcome you to send our policy team questions or comments on bills or topics of concern. We also encourage you to read through the 2024 Utah Farm Bureau Policy Book, which can also be found under the policy section of our website.

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