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## **WFU members speak up on rural issues at Farm & Rural Lobby Day** *Groundwater, hemp, healthcare and budget priorities among topics discussed*

**MADISON** – Sixty family farmers and rural advocates gathered in Madison Feb. 27 for Wisconsin Farmers Union's Farm & Rural Lobby Day.

Participants advocated for policy priorities set by the grassroots membership at the family farm organization's state convention in Appleton in January. They spoke with their representatives on issues related to groundwater quality, hemp production, and access to affordable healthcare.

Members also shared a number of budget priorities related to agriculture, conservation, and rural economic development. The group advocated for restoring the Ag Development and Diversification program and the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, fully funding the Farm to School competitive grant program and County Land and Conservation staffing grants, and increasing funding for Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin at DATCP. They also supported Governor Evers' \$70 million bonding measure for clean water as well as his nonpartisan redistricting budget proposal.

"The Farm and Rural Lobby Day is an inspiring opportunity to see democracy in action," said Wisconsin Farmers Union President Darin Von Ruden, a dairy farmer from Westby. "Not only does this event help legislators put faces and names to the farmers in our state, it also gives Farmers Union members a better understanding of how they can help shape change in their rural communities."

"Lobby day with the Wisconsin Farmers Union was a fantastic way to work towards positive communication with our legislators," said first-time attendee Alicia Leinberger of Viroqua. "It was a day very well spent, and I got to know other WFU members in my area better as an added bonus."

WFU members will have the opportunity to lobby again this fall, when hundreds of farmers from throughout the country will gather in Washington, D.C. for the National Farmers Union Fly-In in September. Scholarships are available for first-time attendees. For more information, contact the WFU State Office at 715-723-5561.