



**Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association**

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Dear Members of the 2019 Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee:

We urge you in the strongest possible terms **not** to include any language to a potential Motion 999 action you may be considering that would impact the meaning and enforcement of Chapter 125 by the Department of Revenue, as related to 'private party—invitation only' events conducted by Wisconsin's burgeoning group of Agricultural Event Venues (AEVs).

Attached are several documents that were sent to legislators during the past year, educating them on the beneficial economic impact these AEVs provide to Wisconsin's rural economies.

It should be clear that your role is to deliberate on legislation affecting state revenues and appropriations related to the state's biennial budget. The interpretation of Chapter 125 is a non-budgetary issue. Please to not 'fold' to the persistent and aggressive special interest political pressure of the Tavern League of Wisconsin—after having been told repeatedly by DOR's legal team that 'private party—invitation only' events held at Agricultural Event Venues do not need alcohol license(s).

The Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association works to educate and advocate for Agricultural Tourism in Wisconsin. During the past 15 months, we have worked diligently in behalf of members, farmers and event venues regarding the assault of the Wisconsin Tavern League on Department of Revenue regulators to limit competition against their members. This matter of 'private party—invitation-only' events being exempt from needing alcohol licenses has been a non-issue for decades, as the DOR has interpreted and enforced the letter and spirit of Chapter 125 consistently over many years and several changes in administrative leadership. These venues operate 100 % compliant with the spirit and letter of Chapter 125.

Wisconsin's agriculture provides an 88.3-billion-dollar contribution to the state's economy. Tourism contributes 21.6 billion, and Agricultural Event Venues represent a multi-billion dollar share of that. Agricultural tourism represents a critical annual boost for rural communities that have not yet recovered from the 2008 recession. Ag tourism provides much needed diversification for small Wisconsin family farmers who struggle to maintain their farms against rising costs, low commodity prices, and heavy mortgage burdens.

Should you have questions regarding the above, please contact Steve Nagy (920) 205-4200—or Sheila Everhart— (608) 774-1354.

We thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Sheila Everhart and Stephen Nagy