



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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For Release: November 12, 2018
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I'm Thankful for Wisconsin's Bounty *By State Representative Don Vruwink*

As Thanksgiving Day approaches, I look forward to spending time with my family, visiting my brother-in-law's hunting shack, and celebrating my wedding anniversary. This year, my wife Beth and I will be married 40 years. It was not a popular decision with my family to marry during deer-hunting season, but it worked out well for Beth and me.

At Thanksgiving time, images of abundance surround us. The holiday conjures up Norman Rockwell's 1942 painting, "Freedom from Want," which shows a grandmother placing a roasted turkey on the dinner table with her family gathered around. The painting was one in a series depicting the four freedoms that President Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke of in his 1941 State of the Union speech.

Thanksgiving is a good time to think about the bounty of Wisconsin. As a member of the Assembly Agriculture Committee, I visited many small-scale farming operations which show the tremendous diversity of our agriculture economy. I am impressed by the owners who work so hard and truly cherish being able to produce food off of our land and water.

In the upcoming legislative session, I plan to bring my legislative colleagues to more farms in my district, including one that makes soap from goat milk; a buffalo farm; and cold-weather grape growers.

I think we could make a pretty good Thanksgiving dinner from Wisconsin agricultural products. Our top 10 products are: dairy products, cattle and calves, corn for silage, soybeans, potatoes, cranberries, chicken, hogs, hay, and chicken eggs. We are number one nationwide in cranberries, ginseng, snap beans, cheese, and milk goats. We are also one of the top states for carrots, cucumbers and green peas. We rank 10th nationwide for turkey production. We are also known for our apples and tart cherries.

When the Saturday Evening Post published the painting, "Freedom from Want," the magazine also published a corresponding essay by Carlos Bulosan, a migrant laborer from the Philippines. He wrote about the life of many Americans whose daily experience was far from the bountiful scene in the painting.

And so it is important on Thanksgiving, as always, to remember the people who do not have enough food or clean water or decent housing. We should do what we can to help out those in need.

We should also remember that we have to be ever vigilant to strive to achieve and protect the four freedoms President Roosevelt talked about: Freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom from fear, and freedom from want.

State Representative Don Vruwink represents parts of Rock, Walworth, Jefferson, and Dane counties. These include the communities of Whitewater, Milton, Edgerton, Footville, the Town of Janesville, part of the Village of Oregon, and surrounding townships. He can be reached at 608-266-3790, Rep.Vruwink@legis.wisconsin.gov, and P.O. Box 8953, Madison WI 53708.

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