

BACKGROUND

Assembly Republican Agenda for Rural Wisconsin

State Representatives Al Ott of Forest Junction and John Ainsworth of Shawano led Republican Assembly Caucus efforts to create an agenda which addresses the self-identified needs of rural Wisconsinites. The process used to develop the agenda was extensive and analyzed the unique challenges facing rural Wisconsin.

In May of this year, Republicans asked 54 agricultural organizations how the state could better serve the needs of farmers. They also asked 58 Community Development Resource Agents, 21 Main Street Program Managers, 22 Rural Economic Development Grant Recipients, 62 Wisconsin Economic Development Association members, and 132 Wisconsin Hospital Association members what could be done to improve existing state programs aimed at encouraging economic development of rural areas.

In total, 72 replies were received from the 349 organizations and individuals surveyed. Many of the responses contained similar ideas. Other concerns and suggestions were parochial to a specific group. All of the shared concerns and ideas were considered and many were included in the Republican Agenda for Rural Wisconsin.

In July, Republican Assembly Caucus members received summaries of the 72 responses. Using the summaries as a basis, the caucus members spent a day exchanging ideas relating to rural Wisconsin. They also offered their own ideas, many of which came from constituent contacts or from first-hand agricultural experiences. The ideas were then prioritized by caucus members and became the foundation for the Republican Agenda for Rural Wisconsin.

It is the hope and intention of the caucus to move forward with the Republican Agenda for Rural Wisconsin when the Legislature begins the 1995-96 session in January. The Agenda is the first-step toward establishment of an on-going commitment to rural Wisconsin.

History of the Republican Agenda for Rural Wisconsin

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Assembly Republican Rural Agenda

A Year of Accomplishments for Wisconsin's Farmers

After more than two decades of Democrat lip-service to Wisconsin's rural communities, Republicans took control of the Assembly in 1994 with a pledge to work for rural Wisconsin. After a year in the Assembly, Republicans have exceeded all expectations in getting the job done.

Meaningful Property Tax Relief – Assembly Republicans cut government fat and provided the largest tax cut in state history -- \$1.2 billion in property tax relief. Not only will every Wisconsin property taxpayer see their taxes go down, but Wisconsin farmers will see an average farm property tax reduction of 20% starting in 1996.

Use-Value Assessment – In addition, we passed use-value assessment which will require that agricultural land be assessed for its actual use and not its potential cost for development. The use-value assessment freeze will save farmers \$12.7 million in 1996 alone. Over a ten-year phase-in of use-value assessment practices, agricultural property taxes will be reduced by approximately \$82 million. Republicans delivered both tax reductions and tax fairness.

Protecting the Right to Farm – Understanding the importance of Wisconsin's \$20 billion agricultural industry, Assembly Republicans delivered a Right to Farm bill designed to prevent trivial lawsuits against farmers for simply doing their job.

Credit Relief Outreach Program (CROP) – After years

of annual reauthorizations, the new Republican Legislature acted decisively to make CROP permanent. CROP provides eligible farmers with loan guarantees up to \$20,000 for agricultural production inputs, and interest rate subsidies up to 2 percent.

Farm Asset Reinvestment Management (FARM) Program – The FARM program provides guaranteed loans up to \$100,000 to assist farmers in improving and acquiring farm assets.

Regulatory Reform – In addition to protecting and assisting Wisconsin's farmers in competing in the twenty-first century, the Legislature also eliminated many unnecessary regulations. Republicans eliminated brucellosis testing requirements for the intra-state movement of cattle, repealed the unworkable calf-marking law,

and ensured that farmers recognize their contribution to protecting the environment by requiring the state agricultural cleanup fee to be listed on seed and fertilizer invoices. To help maintain access to rural health care, we eliminated overlapping regulations and established a new category for rural medical centers which provide a wide-range of health care services in rural areas.

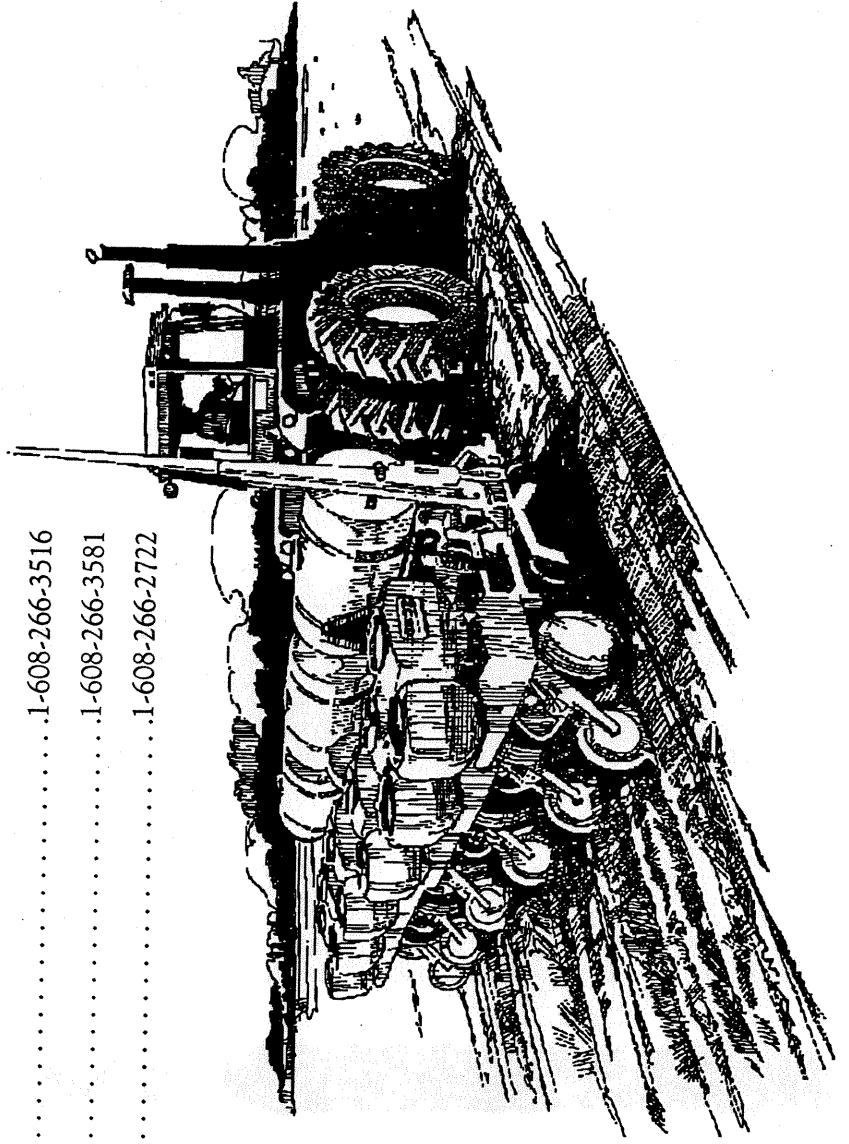
Rural Leadership – For the first time in two decades, rural legislators have had a large voice in the workings of the state legislature. Farmers, current and former, are chairs of sixteen standing Assembly committees, including the powerful Joint Committee on Finance, Committee on Mandates, and the Committees on Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

Much Accomplished, Much More to Do

While Assembly Republicans have worked hard for rural Wisconsin, there is still a lot more to do. The next few years will be crucial for us to ensure that property tax relief, regulatory reform and a farmer-friendly state government continue to strengthen the economic security of Wisconsin's farm families.

State Help Numbers

- Toll-Free Legislative Hotline1-800-362-9472
- Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Hotline1-800-422-7128
- Attorney General1-608-266-1221
- Business Hotline - Department of Development1-800-435-7287
- Farmers Assistance Hotline1-800-942-2474
- Industry, Labor & Human Relations1-608-266-3131
- Insurance Commission Hotline1-800-236-8517
- Department of Natural Resources1-608-266-2621
- Department of Revenue1-608-266-1611
- Small Business Coordinator - Office of the Lieutenant Governor1-608-266-3516
- Department of Transportation1-608-266-3581
- Unemployment Compensation1-608-266-2722



Your State Representative:

_____ District No.

Capitol Address & Telephone:

District Information:

Johne's disease is a serious problem in this state. We support increased education on prevention and more research to develop a better test and vaccine. When an infected herd is to be sold at auction, the fact that Johne's is a problem should be made public.

We urge more research and education on the impact of Lyme disease on animals and humans.

We oppose unreasonable restrictions on the use of antibiotics in livestock feed except where it has been proven conclusively to be harmful to humans or livestock.

Animal Welfare — We recommend that the positive aspects of animal husbandry be vigorously promoted and that we seek a better understanding by the general public of the economic importance of animal agriculture to the total economy. No segment of society has more concern for the well-being of poultry and livestock than the producer.

Domestication and artificial selection of livestock have made farm animals dependent on humans. Consequently, according to the currently accepted moral and ethical standards of our society, humans have no choice but to accept this dependence as a commitment to practice humane conduct toward domestic animals and to prevent avoidable suffering at all stages of their lives. Accordingly, we wholly endorse animal welfare and reject the concept of animal rights.

We support the right of farmers to raise livestock in accordance with commonly accepted agricultural practices. Whereas animal-based medical research benefits both humans and animals — including pets, farm animals and endangered species — we continue to strongly support using animals for research. We support our trespass law to provide stiff penalties for the intentional and unauthorized release of animals, including animals lawfully confined for scientific research, commercial, or educational purposes.

We urge the WFBF to beef up the animal rights resistance movement through effective publicity.

Other — We urge the continued and expanded use of balanced meals, with adequate levels of all animal proteins, in the school lunch and senior citizen meal programs.

We urge that livestock market reports reflect the number of cattle sold at the quoted prices.

We support the continued availability of FDA approved animal medications for over-the-counter sale.

We encourage all livestock producers to complete voluntary quality assurance programs to assure the quality and safety of milk and meat.

GRAIN

We favor a revision of the grading and pricing system for feed and cereal grains to reflect premiums for quality and we recommend that grain be priced on a dry matter basis.

We encourage the grain industry to study alternative methods of handling and transporting grain to maintain quality. We support higher standards of quality for exported grain and the imposition of penalties on those who illegally alter the quality of grain shipments.

We support expanding the number of delivery points and warehouses for contract delivery with the Chicago Board of Trade

futures contracts in order to enhance the price discovery system.

We urge greater utilization of the Great Lakes for the shipment of grain and other agricultural products. We support legislation at the state or national level that will enhance a producer's ability to recover losses due to the financial failure of a grain handler.

We support legislation at the federal and state level which would clarify that grain sold to a purchaser would remain the property of the farmer and his credit or until it is paid for and the funds are deposited in the bank.

FEDERAL FARM POLICY

Government programs to improve farm income should be designed and administered to enhance market opportunities to the end that farmers will earn higher incomes in the marketplace and will not be dependent on government payments for a portion of their income.

We support a broad-based agricultural policy which includes commodity loans.

Be it resolved that a loan program with values that encourage participation would be the main thrust of the farm program. Loan programs for commodities should be at levels that cover at least 100% of acres of program crops and 90% of the national average cost which becomes the loan rate. All loans and interest must be repaid in full upon sale of the crop. There will be no forfeiture option and no storage payments, if a producer hasn't paid off the previous year's loan, and the USDA determines that the old loan is well-secured by the condition of the mortgaged commodity. The producer would be eligible for a loan on a second year's production. The third year, the producer would not be eligible for a loan unless the first year's production was redeemed. The USDA should determine the estimated demand for each upcoming growing season and provide public notice of projected "needed acres." Production from needed acres would be eligible for loan on stored product. There would be no set asides. Non-program crops could be planted on excess acres.

Be it resolved that should the United States place an embargo on any product produced by domestic farmers, all loans shall become nonrecourse loans, and the producer's loan could be paid in full by repayment on 80% dollars the farmer is able to capture from the marketplace.

Be it resolved that the existing CCC purchase program will be dropped as a support mechanism. Government purchases will be made on the open market for government needs only.

Be it resolved that dairy prices could be supported by the competitive marketplace and not by isolation of product from the market place by government purchase and storage.

We support phasing out all federal government supports for the dairy industry to allow for the free market to reign.

We support federal farm policy that gives producers more flexibility to plant for the market, including the substitution of soybeans and forage crops on corn base acreage. We recommend that more realistic yield data on which to base farm program benefits be adopted including ASCS yield checks on individual farms. In addition, sweet corn and popcorn planted without a canning contract and harvested with ears on as silage, should be counted toward corn acreage.

We recognize that the public's interest in sustainable agriculture, integrated pest management, and best management practices. Therefore, regulations tied to these practices should carefully consider the need for an adequate food supply.

Technology — We support biotechnology and other new technology that helps the farmer compete in a world market. New technology should be thoroughly tested for safety to both farmers and consumers. The correct government agencies should decide if they will use the technology, not politicians.

Conservation Reserve — We believe that a substantial amount of productive farmland must be removed from production. We urge expansion of the Conservation Reserve Program to allow all cropland susceptible to runoff to participate in the program regardless of present conservation practices being used to accomplish this goal.

Bids accepted for cropland entering the Conservation Reserve should be consistent with local and rental rates.

We urge that there be better weed control on all set aside and CRP acres.

Embargoes — We oppose all governmental restrictions on the sale of agricultural products in world markets. Agricultural exports must not be held hostage in the name of political expediency or foreign policy.

Exports — Exports are the lifeblood of American agriculture. Therefore, we recommend that the following actions be taken to increase our export efforts:

- Aggressively seek expanded markets for "value added" agricultural products.
- Increase pressure on all foreign nations to remove trade barriers and open up their protected markets.
- Increase export credits for the Commodity Credit Corporation and provide greater financing to meet foreign competition.
- Increase P.L. 480 Food for Peace shipments to reduce current surpluses and help foster world stability.

We recommend that the Export Enhancement Program be made available to all countries where the United States faces unfair or subsidized competition. This program should continue as long as stocks are in surplus for the various commodities. Furthermore, we urge that the United States grant the former Soviet Republics most-favored nation status, despite the fact that they do not have a law with respect to Jewish immigration. We support honoring the pledge to the American farmer that agriculture products will not be used as a weapon for furthering political goals.

We believe it would be in the best long-term interest of U.S. agriculture to negotiate a new GATT agreement which would call for all countries to eliminate their trade-impeding subsidy programs. This would result in free and fair trade world wide.

We oppose domestic content legislation, as it will certainly result in retaliation against U.S. farm exports.

Since cargo preference requirements make U.S. farm exports less competitive in world markets, we support the elimination of any cargo preference legislation that applies to agricultural products.

Government Reserves — We oppose the creation of a government-controlled food reserve in the United States and U.S. participation in any internationally-controlled reserve.

To meet emergency needs throughout the world, we favor the establishment of an international fund to be used for the purchase of agricultural commodities only in the amounts and when needed. All nations of the world should support such a fund and should share in its control in proportion to their contributions.

Cross Compliance — We support cross compliance between feed grain program benefits and soil conservation practices. We urge a more reasonable penalty structure for minor violations of federal Swampbuster and Sodbuster requirements.

ASCS — We recommend that state, county and community ASCS committeemen be full-time farmers who receive a major part of their income as active producers of agricultural products. We urge that committeemen be provided with greater input into federal farm programs and discretion regarding ASCS policies to foster greater cooperation in the farm community.

We believe that set-aside land should not be harvested without substantial payment in time of disaster.

We support federal legislation that would make processed high moisture corn eligible for immediate redemption of commodity loans.

We urge that storage payments to producers be equivalent to those made to commercial storage warehouses and that these payments be reduced to encourage more movement of grain into the marketplace.

We recommend that changes be made in federal farm programs to differentiate between surplus stocks and normal inventories of commodities.

All monies collected from farmers under government programs should stay within the agricultural budget.

We oppose using any assessments against farmers for purposes other than that specific commodity program's cost.

Agriculture Imports — We are willing to compete on an equal basis, involving both quality and price, with producers in other countries for world markets. However, when any nation resorts to large direct or indirect subsidies to win these markets, we believe that countervailing duties should be imposed and paid for before these imported products are unloaded.

We also urge that federal agencies responsible for inspecting imports be adequately funded to permit entry of only those agricultural products and by-products which meet the same health and sanitary standards required of our producers and processors.

All government contracts for food consumed in the U.S. should require that the food be grown in the U.S. where possible. Food or feed products should not be imported if they have been raised or treated with chemicals that are illegal in the U.S., but are legal in the country of origin.

We recommend that all imported products be clearly labeled as such and indicate the country of origin.

Capper-Volstead Act — We urge continued support and defense of our cooperatives and the laws under which cooperatives are organized.

FARM FINANCE

Beginning Farmers — To maintain the family farm and to encourage the transfer of farms, there is a need to assist the beginning farmer. We urge that this be done through existing

lending institutions, tax incentives, individual assistance and existing governmental agencies. We urge that loan guarantees be extended to individuals providing land contracts as are currently provided to lending institutions.

Farm Credit System — We believe that preservation of the Farm Credit System is in the long-term best interest of U.S. agriculture.

FmHA — We recognize that FmHA was created to be a lender of last resort. However, we are concerned that many struggling, but good farm managers, are placed at a severe competitive disadvantage because they are unable to qualify for the lower than market rate loans and other programs that most FmHA borrowers receive. Therefore, we support a graduation program which gradually increases interest rates on FmHA loans to current market rates.

WHEDA — We support continuation of WHEDA loan programs to agriculture and agri-business.

Bankruptcy Law — We are very concerned about some of the results of Chapter 12 bankruptcy laws, especially its effect on the selling of farm property. We strongly believe that revisions in this law are necessary to protect all parties of property transfer and indebtedness.

NATURAL RESOURCES & THE ENVIRONMENT

Farmers are proud to do their part in maintaining the high standard of environmental quality in Wisconsin. Farmers have made sincere efforts to comply with and have committed major capital expenditures to meet federal and state guidelines or standards relative to water, air and solid wastes.

These efforts are frustrated and often nullified by the imposition of poorly-developed standards and regulations. Any regulations which are unduly restrictive to individual farm operations should not be applied unless research has developed practical methods of maintaining air and water quality consistent with efficient and economical farming operations. Pollution problems, occurring where previously accepted guidelines and regulations have been complied with, should be remedied at public expense.

We favor tax incentives and increased cost sharing of pollution abatement equipment and structures to encourage their use and to diminish potentially devastating costs.

Groundwater — A continuing and abundant supply of clean groundwater is vital to agriculture and rural families across the state. There is a need for increased monitoring, research and education relating to groundwater problems.

We believe that there should be uniform national pesticide residue standards and that any regulations should be applied as uniformly as possible, depending on geological conditions.

We support state legislation to expand the current PECFA fund to include petroleum storage tanks under 1,100 gallons for cost sharing of remediation resulting from leaking tanks including fuel oil for heating purposes. We urge the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations and the Department of Natural Resources to review the current PECFA program and determine where costs could be cut and duplication of efforts could be curtailed. We urge that farm fuel tank regulations be rewritten so that they are easier to understand and less expensive to comply

with. We urge that new ideas for rural septic and water supply systems be tested and approved for use to improve the systems and expand the choices available for new installations.

Soil Conservation — We urge all farmers to work with local land conservation committees to establish good farm practices in the interest of pollution control and land conservation. Retaining soil and agricultural chemicals on the land is in the best interests of the farm community both economically and environmentally.

Soil conservation programs should be of a voluntary nature with a minimum of regulation. Such programs should be administered at the local and state levels by agencies closely associated with agriculture, and which provide for farmer representation.

We are opposed to the use of alternative conservation systems which would relax current soil conservation requirements.

Because of new farming practices such as no-till and minimum-till that greatly reduce soil losses we recommend that the soil conservation service establish new standards for contour strip cropping, allowing wider contour strips. This practice would encourage large farmers with bigger equipment to participate.

Farmland Preservation Program — We recommend that the Farmland Preservation Act be revised to provide greater property tax relief to more farm families and family farm corporations. We also urge that:

- the income and property tax limits be increased.
- the \$25,000 ceiling on depreciation be eliminated or increased.
- the minimum credit be increased.
- farmers residing in towns that are decertified should be allowed to enter into farmland preservation agreements and receive a portion of the available credit.

We feel that with the increase of multi-family farms in the state, the Farmland Preservation formula should be rewritten to reflect the increased number of household incomes related with this operation.

Farmland Preservation — We urge the Farmland Preservation Program Formula be modified to provide additional credits or that tax credits be made available to all farmers who implement or incorporate approved soil conservation erosion and pollution abatement programs.

~~**Drainage and Water Law** — We urge the Legislature and Congress to revise our laws pertaining to navigable waters, to provide less regulation and insure that the riparian rights of landowners are better recognized by streamlining the permit process for irrigation purposes.~~

~~We support legislation to revise and update our drainage laws. We believe that the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection should be given more authority over agricultural drainage matters. We also believe that public lands should pay their fair share of any assessments required to establish or maintain a drainage system.~~

~~We oppose DNR interference with water control and construction of dams, including those on cranberry operations.~~

We believe that the present laws regarding the installation of high capacity wells serving municipalities should be amended to require the preparation of an environmental impact statement or similar study establishing that there will be no adverse impact on the quality and supply of local wells.

We urge changes that would require municipalities to control storm water runoff to reduce the serious flooding and financial losses this water can cause downstream.

There are farms that experience animal waste run-off problems, resulting in the closing down of livestock operations and forceful relocation. ~~Therefore, we support more flexibility in NR243 (Animal Waste Runoff Program) to allow cost sharing for relocation in such cases.~~

Recycling — We strongly support more recycling and in an effort to expand the market for recycled products, we discourage the use of poisonous dyes and staples in newspapers and magazines. Further, we urge more use of:

- biodegradable materials (i.e. diapers, bags);
- recycled newsprint by the printing industry;
- shredded newspaper as animal bedding;
- returnable and reusable containers wherever possible.

We urge that oil companies be required to take back used oil barrels or provide bulk oil service.

Further, we support legislation and private sector programs that will drastically reduce the amount of material going into landfills.

We support stricter enforcement of our current litter laws and urge that beverage containers have a significant return deposit to reduce the cost of cleaning up roadsides and to reduce the losses incurred by farmers due to damaged equipment and injury to livestock.

Forestry — We support efforts to promote the proper utilization and management of our forest resources. We urge greater effort by the DNR to enforce compliance with the management contracts entered into under the Managed Forest Law.

Wildlife — ~~In certain areas of the state the excessive wildlife population is causing a severe loss of crops and income for farm families. We recommend the following actions be taken:~~

- Reduce the deer herd to at least DNR goals.
- Increase the yearly goose harvest in proportion to flock growth to reduce the overwinter population to 500,000 birds.
- Issue permits for night shooting and shining where requested by landowners suffering extensive crop damage.
- Continue a "hot spot" shooting permit program to allow hunters an additional deer on farms suffering chronic damage.
- Seek greater participation by farmers in Conservation Congress activities by changing the date of the spring meeting to be more convenient for farmers to attend.
- The DNR and Wildlife Service should not be allowed to increase wildlife population of any species until crop damage payments reach 100 percent.
- A tenant farmer be issued a free deer and turkey license upon request to be used on the landowner's property.
- We support the traditional nine-day gun deer hunt over the Thanksgiving holiday.

We urge that the wildlife damage and abatement program be renamed the wildlife damage and management program. We also urge the following changes in the program:

- Increase hunting license fees and/or general purpose revenues to fund damage claims at 100 percent. Since state residents as a

whole favor a large state wildlife population they should share the costs — along with hunters and farmers — through general revenue contributions to the wildlife damage program.

- Increase the damage payment ceiling.
- Extend coverage to wild turkeys and sandhill cranes.
- Eliminate the requirement to file an affidavit to participate in the wildlife damage and abatement program.
- Base the deductible for a crop damage claim on a percent of damage.
- Exempt apiaries from the leasing contract and open hunting provisions currently required to participate in the wildlife damage and abatement program.

We urge that landowners be allowed to transfer their preference rights for hunters choice permits to relatives or the person managing the farm for which the permit will be issued.

We urge the Department of Natural Resources to lower the contractual years of managed forest land program from 25-50 years to 10 and 15 years and allow open hunting (optional).

The DNR and Wildlife Service should not be allowed to introduce any species of wildlife into an area unless approved by the majority vote in a referendum of the townships affected and that the DNR pay for any crop damage resulting from such action. Be it resolved that the Wisconsin DNR shall be responsible for the removal of large undomesticated "roadkill" carcasses from state and federal highway right of ways.

We support legislation to permit counties to offer bounties on rattlesnakes.

We support legislation making it illegal to chase bear with dogs during the closed season.

We urge state and federal action to control crop damage done by sandhill cranes and blackbirds. We support a season on sandhill cranes.

~~We support the DNR rules for use of leghold traps when used for predator control.~~

Ag Chemicals — We recognize the problems involved in the use of agricultural chemicals as they relate to our environment. We are concerned that farmers may lose the opportunity to use essential agricultural chemicals and drugs in an appropriate and safe manner. We urge users of these products to be aware of the dangers involved and to conform to recommended usage.

We believe that compliance with federally-approved label instructions when applying agchemicals should absolve farmers from liability for any contamination that may result.

Since agricultural chemical spills pose a threat to our environment and these contaminated areas will be required to be restored, ~~we urge the formation of an agricultural chemical clean-up fund which is not funded by user fees, but rather by the consumers as a whole, being the ultimate beneficiaries of our food production system.~~

There are many areas of our hazardous waste disposal program that are vague in procedures and responsibility. We urge the Natural & Environmental Resources Committee of WFBF and AFBF to help perfect programs and procedures to determine and designate responsibility and educate personnel in proper handling and disposal of hazardous waste.

We oppose a complete ban on the use of any agricultural chemical or drug unless it can be demonstrated positively by prolonged and responsible research that use of a product represents a clear and present danger to health or that its use would seriously jeopardize our environment. Serious consideration should also be given to the technical and economic feasibility of any bans or limitations on the use of agricultural chemicals.

The recent Supreme Court ruling regarding the Town of Casey allows any local unit of government to enact pesticide regulations. We urge Congressional action to reverse this decision and provide for uniform regulation at the national level.

We support regulations on lawn care fertilizers and pesticides equal to the regulations required of agriculture.

We also believe that the unknowing buyer of property should not be held liable for pollution caused by prior owners. When materials were disposed of in earlier years and are now found to be hazardous the previous owners should not be held liable when the so called dumping was legal and logical.

We support a continuation of the state's ag clean sweep program.

We support public and private funded research by the university system that will result in less reliance on agricultural chemicals for weed and pest control.

We support an expanded program by Farm Bureau to inform and educate the public on the need for agricultural chemicals.

We support federal indemnities to relieve catastrophic losses from accidentally contaminated farm products and contaminated spill sites.

Noxious Weeds — We support stricter enforcement of noxious weed laws, especially on land owned by lending institutions, absentee land owners, local, state and federal governments.

We support the inclusion of multi-flora roses on the state noxious weed list. Further, we support the creation of programs that would pay farmers to eradicate it.

Property Rights — We reaffirm our belief in the rights of private property ownership, and in the ability of landowners to make wise land use decisions. We oppose state or federal actions that would deprive private landowners of their property rights without just compensation.

Local Zoning — We are concerned about the loss of productive agricultural lands. Haphazard growth of the urban community results in high costs of public services, conflicts between urban and rural landowners, and the destruction of precious resources.

We urge farmers to become informed about and involved in town and county zoning ordinances that will help avert these problems and preserve the agricultural base of the community. We recommend that these town and county ordinances create exclusive agricultural zones in which farming is designated as the priority use and other users remain in these zones without recourse to abate the practices which are common to farming.

We urge the publication of proposed changes in zoning rules and ordinances 60 days in advance of the effective date, with a reasonable time to allow the public to take action to correct any injustices.

We support state legislation that will allow only the annexation of land owned by the petitioners. We urge that the Wisconsin Farm Bureau join forces with the Wisconsin Town's Association

to introduce and support legislation to improve the annexation laws to make them fairer for property owners not wanting to be annexed.

Public Land — Eminent domain proceedings should be used only when there is a preponderance of evidence indicating that the project is highly desirable in the public interest. Local units of government should be accorded the same protections under the eminent domain law as private individuals.

We support a public policy which would require all public agencies to use lands which are less valuable for agricultural use for public projects. We believe that land should only be acquired by the government for truly public purposes, and any government owned lands which are not used for public purposes should be returned to the former or adjacent property owner.

We oppose allowing non-profit tax exempt groups to buy property and re-sell it to the federal government for a profit in the name of preservation.

We oppose funding for any more land purchases by the DNR. We recommend that agricultural land currently owned by the DNR be leased back to farmers at local rates and under local customs.

Wetlands — We recognize the importance of preserving valuable wetlands and are concerned about the loss of these wetlands. We urge that the stringent regulations applied to farmers regarding wetlands be extended and enforced to all landowners, municipalities and developers on an equal and fair basis.

Since the Wisconsin Department of Transportation may mitigate wetlands to expand and improve highways, we support legislation to allow for equal treatment for agricultural production purposes.

We believe that farmer's rights should be recognized in any wetlands legislation, including the right to maintain farm drainage systems and ditches. Any such legislation should compensate (i.e. property tax credits) farmers for restrictions placed on any lands classified as wetlands.

We believe that a consistent set of definitions and guidelines needs to be adopted for all wetlands. Further, wetlands that have been farmed should be allowed to remain in agricultural production.

Trespass and Liability — There exists a trend toward freedom of property occupation and trespass by the general public. We support action to recognize and enforce ownership rights to prohibit unwanted activities on private property, including those of governmental agencies.

Landowners should not be held liable for those injured when trespassing or using land, with or without permission. State law currently provides protection from liability for landowners who allow the recreational use of their land. However, we urge that the maximum amount of compensation allowed for recreational use under this statute be unlimited.

Right-to-Farm — We must conserve, protect and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural land for the production of food and fiber. We are concerned that when non-agricultural land uses extend into agricultural areas, farming operations often become the subject of nuisance suits.

We support continued efforts which will protect agricultural operations from nuisance suits resulting from odor, dust, noise, etc. when the farming enterprise is operated in accordance with

current agricultural practices. We also urge consideration of the role zoning, education, research and other activities may play in helping to prevent or alleviate these conflicts between differing land uses. We urge Wisconsin to develop stronger "right to farm" legislation.

ENERGY

We support a state and national energy policy which includes the following:

- Energy conservation
- Increased domestic production
- Increased production and marketing of agriculturally based fuels.
- The use of tax incentives to accomplish these policies.

We support research and implementation on alternate sources of energy, including ways of converting farm wastes and farm products to energy. We support additional emphasis and research regarding the use of refuse for energy plants in order to more efficiently use waste materials. To help encourage a new industry start up in Wisconsin, we support legislation providing direct tax credits to manufacturing plants here in the state producing ethanol and other corn products. Because agriculture and related industries are almost wholly dependent on petroleum for energy, we urge steps be taken to place high priority on farm fuel needs. Adequate supplies of gasoline, diesel fuel, propane and other burning oils are essential to the production, processing and transportation of farm products.

Leaded Fuel — We support the continued production and use of leaded gas that has the minimum lead content sufficient to operate those engines that require leaded gas.

Electric Utilities — We support the development of electrical power facilities, regardless of their energy base, to provide for the demands of agriculture and the entire economy. We also urge revitalization of our hydro-electrical plants. We believe that nuclear waste should be disposed of in the state in which it is generated and research should be continued to find better methods of utilizing nuclear waste. We also support intensified research and dissemination of public information regarding the disposal of nuclear wastes resulting from electrical generation within the state. Utility companies should pay all expenses for damage done to lines that are buried less than 30 inches deep. We recommend that all parties, especially utility companies, use material other than metal to mark reference points on farm property. We support continued study of and action on the stray voltage electromagnetic fields, electric fields and ground current problem. We urge utilities to cooperate with farmers to find solutions to these serious problems. We urge expanded educational programs for veterinarians, electricians, equipment suppliers, utility ag representatives and others regarding stray voltage. We recommend that the PSC establish a policy on the modernization of lines, equipment and facilities to alleviate the stray voltage program. This policy should also apply to rural electric cooperatives as well as private utilities. We reaffirm the unrestricted right and responsibility of all rural electric systems to serve those areas in which they initiated service and continue to serve. We strongly oppose

the imposition of conditions or restrictions which disadvantage the cooperatives in extending or continuing service in these areas.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Safety — The farm operator and members of his family are the usual victims of farm accidents.

We support educational programs on the safe use of farm equipment, handling of livestock and removal of hazards on the farm.

We support expanded tractor safety training for farm children by admitting them to these courses at a younger age (i.e., 11-12). All farm children should be strongly encouraged to participate.

We urge Farm Bureau and affiliated companies to actively promote farm safety. We also support continued education through programs such as "First Care".

We urge that CPR training be made available to all high school students.

We support legislation to continue the exemption for farms with 10 or fewer employees from OSHA regulations. This legislation should also provide that only warnings be given for first violations.

We encourage joggers, bicyclists and walkers to wear reflective clothing when using public roads.

Due to a lack of population density and economic resources of rural fire protection districts, we encourage that future regulations should not inhibit survival of those departments.

Health Care Costs — We support every possible effort to better manage health care costs, while still providing accessible high quality care. We support the recommendations contained in the report issued by the Farm Bureau Rural Health Care Committee.

We support a requirement that all medical providers send an itemized billing to every recipient of medical services.

National Health Insurance — We oppose compulsory national health insurance in any form.

Abortion — We oppose abortions except in the case of rape, incest or when the life of the mother is in danger and disagree with U.S. Supreme Court decisions liberalizing abortion on demand.

AIDS Legislation — We urge the enactment of legislation which would require the testing of individuals who might have been exposed to AIDS and other diseases which are possible health risks to the individuals and to others. Further, that the results of those tests be made available to protect the health care workers and others who are obligated to work with those individuals.

LABOR

We uphold the right of employees to bargain collectively. However, we condemn the use by either labor or management of force, coercion, intimidation, secondary boycotts, or other means designed to force its will upon the other.

We maintain that a high standard of living is possible only through high production per person, and therefore condemn such practices as slow-downs, make work, featherbedding, and prohibition of improvements in machinery and methods.

We believe that strikes in the following activities are not in the public interest and should be prohibited:

1. A strike by local, state or federal government employees. We urge that the penalties provided under law for illegal strikes by public employees be enforced.
2. A strike in agriculture or in agricultural processing or handling, during a critical period of production, harvesting, or export.
3. A strike against a regulated public utility, such as power, telephone service, and transportation.
4. A jurisdictional strike.

We oppose the repeal of Section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act, which allows the states to enact right-to-work laws. We favor such a law in this state.

We oppose any further extension of unemployment compensation to farm employees.

We oppose increasing the state minimum wage or any other labor requirements beyond those required federally.

We support changes in state and federal laws to enable migrant farm workers to be classified as self-employed if they receive a portion of the crop they harvest as compensation.

Youth should have the opportunity to obtain employment in agriculture. In most instances the employment of minors in agriculture is socially and economically desirable. Work experience is an essential part of the educational process and develops self-reliance and self-respect.

We request that the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations include Christmas tree farmers in the definition of agriculture under our labor laws.

We believe contract negotiations with teachers and other local government employees should be a local responsibility. We urge the repeal of final and binding arbitration. Until this is accomplished, we support reform of the existing law to provide greater balance between labor and management in this process. We also believe that binding arbitration settlements, including salary and fringe benefits, should not exceed the current inflation rate.

EDUCATION

Education is the key to the preservation of our freedoms and continuing economic development. We pledge continued efforts to strengthen our educational system and improve educational opportunity for young people. We believe that proficiency in the basics of reading, writing and mathematics should be attained by all students in our educational system. These things can best be achieved by individuals participating at the local level.

Elementary and Secondary — Elementary and secondary education is essential to the development of the individual. Local school boards are being forced to comply with additional state and federal standards to qualify for aids. We believe these regulations erode the rights of local citizens and divert attention from the basic educational needs of our youth. We support legislation that will return control of education to the local boards of education and the citizens they represent.

We are not in favor of state mandated pre-school programs.

We believe that school boards should not approve higher spending for school operation and maintenance than was approved at the annual meeting. We suggest that a special meeting be called by the school board if they significantly exceed the

budget adopted at the annual meeting. School districts should not be penalized for responsible budgeting.

We recommend that the school calendar and school day remain a local decision.

We believe that the net income of property taxpayers in a school district should be a factor in the state school aid formula.

We support student competency testing programs and widespread publication of those results. Further, we believe that teachers should be required to demonstrate their competency prior to entering and during their teaching career.

We continue to support the separation of church and state in regard to public school education, and oppose the promotion of particular sects and doctrines, including secular humanism. We support sex education curricula that is approved by parents in local school districts and overseen by human growth and development committees.

We oppose the busing of students or the altering of school district boundaries to force integration. We also oppose the creation of school districts through forced consolidation of outlying districts into metro districts.

In an effort to control school spending we would like to see the pre-1977 federal law amended to extend the replacement time for school buses to 1994 and allow approved retrofit on otherwise sound buses.

As many refugees have special educational needs that place an additional burden on the property tax, we urge that funding of their special education be the responsibility of the federal government.

We affirm that English should be the official language of the State of Wisconsin.

We encourage school districts to revise their agriculture curriculum to a level where credits in agriculture courses can be utilized as a science credit. We urge revision in the teacher certification requirements to allow for dual certification in agriculture and science for education majors graduating in Wisconsin.

We urge that lactose-enhanced milk be made available in school milk programs which makes milk consumption possible.

Ag In The Classroom — We believe more education regarding modern agriculture and food production should be provided at the elementary and secondary levels.

VTAE — VTAE tuition should more closely reflect the costs associated with the educational program offered. We recommend that tuition fees charged for any classes relating to hobbies or sports include the total cost of the use of the facilities as well as instructional costs.

To assure greater rural representation, we support maintaining the current system of appointing local VTAE board members.

We favor the development of closer coordination between post high school vocational and academic education programs to better utilize our educational facilities. Vocational schools should provide training in vocational skills only and not attempt to duplicate university programs.

UW System — We support programs to enhance the capability of our Colleges of Agriculture to respond to the educational and research needs of farmers, which ultimately benefits all of society.

We believe that all credits should be transferable within our state university system.

We urge the continuation of a strong extension youth-oriented animal agricultural program in Wisconsin.

Be it resolved that financial aid for students in college or technical schools be based on parental or guardian income only, to the exclusion of assets.

Ag Research — We support increased funding of agricultural research and technology which will benefit the family farmer and enable him to compete economically. We favor biotechnology research that is properly monitored with reasonable safety, social and economic standards being followed prior to and during implementation of the research.

We support continued public and private research for "new uses" of farm commodities such as ethanol, CMA, sweeteners, soy ink and degradable plastics.

We support continuation of the patent law so companies will continue to spend research dollars to develop new products.

WELFARE

We are concerned that dependence on welfare payments is becoming an accepted way of life for many Americans. We recommend legislation and administrative changes in the present welfare program so only the truly needy receive benefits and to help them become self-supporting where possible.

We support limiting all AFDC benefits to existing children at the time of application.

We urge returning full control of welfare programs to local officials. We believe that they are best equipped to make certain that able-bodied workers are not on welfare rolls, that emphasis is placed on strengthening family units, and that tax dollars are not wasted.

We favor the use of supplementary payments, including health insurance, to individuals who accept jobs available which do not provide a pay scale equal to the welfare payment being received.

We favor reducing Wisconsin's welfare benefits to the average benefit level of adjacent states. Wisconsin should pay new residents who qualify for welfare benefits at a rate lower than current Wisconsin welfare recipients. Also, we support the Wisconsin workfare program.

We oppose welfare benefits for new residents until employed for one year while living in the state.

Welfare benefits of illegal immigrants should be limited to their children only.

We recommend that all welfare records be open to the public.

Food Stamps — We support the food stamp program as a means of assisting those truly in need. We urge that emphasis be placed on nutrition.

We urge that procedures for stamp distribution be improved so that only the deserving may participate and only food grown in the U.S. is purchased where possible. Food stamps should be used only for the following items: fruits, vegetables, meats and proteins, milk, dairy, breads and cereals.

We are opposed to the substitution of cash payments for food stamps. Retailers should not be allowed to give change back in cash on food purchases made with food stamps.

We are opposed to the use of federal funds for the production of radio and television spots designed to increase the number of

food stamp recipients. Further, families of workers on strike should be ineligible to receive food stamps.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

In the interest of maintaining accountability in our democratic form of government, we encourage our representatives in government to keep the laws and regulations of the land brief as possible and understandable to the common man. For the government cannot be by the people, for the people, or trusted by the people, if it cannot be understood by the people.

We recommend that each state legislator be responsible for his or her votes—no blind or voice voting.

Administrative Agencies — We support a reduction in the size, overlapping, and proliferation of state and national agencies and all the excessive paperwork required by these agencies.

We support restricting agencies' power to enact penalties without first proving guilt.

We are opposed to automatic escalator clauses in state and federal employee salaries and pensions, including elected officials.

We support a freeze on all federal government salaries until one year after the budget is balanced.

We oppose the way revocation and/or suspension of teenagers drivers licenses are being used as a penalty for underage drinking.

We support mandatory testing of public employees for illegal drugs.

State Budget — We urge that unrelated policy items not be included in the state budget.

Mandated Programs — We feel that the cost of government mandated programs should be picked up by the unit of government which mandates the program.

Department of Natural Resources — Farmers are directly affected in many ways by the decisions, orders, rules, regulations, and activities of the Department of Natural Resources. Since farmers own and operate the majority of the land resources of this state, they are directly concerned with the reasonableness of decisions which affect not only their environment and their health, but their means of making a living. We expect greater cooperation, and understanding from the Department of Natural Resources with the farm community. ~~We strongly recommend that farmers be appointed to the DNR Board.~~

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection — Since the agricultural community is confronted with many problems — such as animal health, groundwater quality, manure management, pesticide contamination to name a few—we urge the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to continue to be active in the development of solutions to these problems.

Bee Inspections — We urge that bee hives be inspected before entry into the state is allowed.

Cabinet Government — We oppose a cabinet system involving any state service or regulatory agency. Such arrangements breed political partisanship, destroy continuity of service, and sterilize a department of its capability to respond to the legitimate concerns of the citizenry.

Elections — We favor the open primary. We are opposed to the current same day registration law in municipalities over 5,000 population.

State referendums should be written in simple and concise language to not confuse the voter.

We urge that the state Supreme Court be given the responsibility of redistricting.

We favor the election of the county constitutional officers at the non-partisan spring elections.

We urge that the results of the national election be withheld until all polls are closed in the continental United States.

We support limiting the consecutive time of service our elected officials can serve in state and national offices to not more than 12 years.

We favor the abolition of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and termination of special treaty rights through purchase or negotiation for fair compensation.

Telephone Service — We oppose basing telephone rates on locally measured service.

We favor retaining single party revertive calling service at no charge to customers.

Fences — We support maintaining the current fence law. We urge that the current fence law be amended to allow the use of visible markers in lieu of a fence when both sides mutually agree.

Current fence law provides that even if a fence is properly constructed and maintained, that the owner of swine is not relieved of liability for any damage hogs do on the premises of an adjoining landowner. We urge that this provision of the law be expanded to include sheep, goats and horses.

We oppose any general requirement that all streams or lakes must be fenced.

Firearms — We oppose the registration of and restrictions on the sale of firearms and ammunition to the general public.

Social Security — We recommend that the Social Security system be returned to its original intent of being a supplemental retirement and disability income and more emphasis be placed on approved voluntary insurance and retirement programs. Since

self-employed farmers cannot add the Social Security tax on to their saleable products, we support paying a rate equal to the employee rate only. We urge equal treatment for "notch babies" in the social security program.

We believe that people who applied for disability social security who are alcohol or drug addicts, should have to go for treatment to remain eligible, with the intent of someday getting off social security.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Members of the 1992 Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation Policy Development committee were:

Bill Hanson, Chairman and WFBF Vice President

District 1: Vicki Raatz, Jefferson County

District 2: Clairmont Brekken, Dane County

District 3: Richard Gorder, Iowa County

District 4: Tom Servais, LaCrosse, County

District 5: James Jarvis, Winnebago County

District 6: David Geiser, Calumet County

District 7: Paul Schmidt, Shawano County

District 8: Janet Greschner, Clark County

District 9: Dick Larson, Polk County

Women's Rep: Darleen Fust, Marathon County

YF Rep: Dan Vandertie, Door County

Tax & Education Committee Chairman:

Jim Holte, Dunn County

Natural Resources Committee Chairman:

Jim Hebbe, Green Lake

County Ag, Labor & Transportation Committee Chairman:

John Malchine, Racine County

The committee reviews the resolutions submitted by the county Farm Bureaus and compiles the resolutions that are proposed at the annual meeting.

4-12-94

Goal: Establish GOP position papers & Agenda on AG/RURAL ISSUES for next session.

Timeline: Release target date - June-July 1
- Proposal - (? veto session)
finalize - June 1 ()

Who: Farmers/Rural Legislators - GOP
Core Group - Ass. Rep. Ag. Comm. members.
1. * - List of: Farmers/Rural Leg. ^{Rural} GOP

* Issues - Collect, Compile, Compile - resolutions, of record from farm organizations, agri-business, rural constituents
- (in file - caucus, from organizations) ^{current, or} most recent.
Create grid evaluation: cross section of issues of concerns

Group	Issue			

Notice - request written ideas if not able to attend - meeting

Prosser :

wants Republicans talking to farmers
Republican farmers talking to Legislators


develop a program, platform, position statement

Doesn't think anyone is doing enough
for rural or farm issues !!

No easy answer

2 or 3 page position paper - that
can be developed into position for next
session.

October 4, 1994

TO: Dave Prosser, Al Ott, John Ainsworth
FROM: Joe Britt 
RE: Attached

After getting comments from each of you, I have written a 2nd draft of the rural issues paper.

Please review this for content and style -- as to the latter I will also be talking to the graphic arts people at the Caucus to help spice up the format.

There are a few substantial changes, to wit:

- * A number of quotes from survey respondents have been added.
- * Language on ethanol (p. 13) has been added.
- * Increased spending on CBED and other rural development programs is specifically, if cautiously, endorsed (2nd to last Paragraph, p. 4)
- * A call for state (p. 19) and federal (p. 22) regulators to become more familiar with all the regulations rural businesses and local governments have to comply with has been added.

I look forward to getting your thoughts. Incidentally, by coincidence a coalition of farm groups just sent a letter to all candidates taking the same position our draft does on spending and taxes.

A REPUBLICAN AGENDA FOR RURAL WISCONSIN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wisconsin's character and tradition are bound up in the rural areas of our state. Source of recreation, site of history and support of two of the state's largest industries -- agriculture and tourism -- rural Wisconsin must be healthy for the good of the state as a whole.

Recognizing this, the Assembly Republican Caucus has attempted a survey of the condition, problems and opportunities facing the largest part of our state.

What follows is the product of that survey, a general guide to the direction Assembly Republicans feel the state government needs to take on issues important to rural Wisconsin. Assembly Republicans pledge to take two steps at the beginning of the next session. Should we Republicans become the majority party, we will:

* Create separate committees for Agriculture and Rural Development. While these areas are closely related in some ways, they are very different in others. Development programs impacting small towns are more efficiently considered separately from programs aimed at enhancing farm profitability.

* Install a farmer as chairman of the Agriculture Committee. It is time we had as Agriculture Committee Chairman someone who has had first-hand experience with farmers' problems before coming to Madison. A Republican Chairman of the Agriculture Committee will lead the way in ensuring that the Assembly looks at farm issues from a farmers' perspective.

During the next session of the Legislature, Assembly Republicans will fight for:

* Full implementation of the property tax cut mandated by the Legislature last year.

* Zero-base budgeting for the state government along with maintaining the spending and revenue caps on local governments enacted by the Legislature.

* Continuing sales tax exemptions for farmers' machinery and equipment, as well as other production inputs.

* Taxing farmland at its value for agricultural use, rather than its highest use value.

* Expansion of successful state rural economic development programs, including Community-Based Economic Development (CBED) and Rural Economic Development (RED) grants.

* Continued and expanded state help for critical rural infrastructure needs, including more local roads and highways and more health care professionals in underserved areas.

* Establishment of a Property Rights Impact Office in the Department of Agriculture to advise the Legislature on the effect environmental legislation may have on the exercise of private property rights.

Assembly Republicans do not pretend that the state government can solve all the problems in rural Wisconsin. We will not cry doom and disaster at a time when most of the state -- including the rural areas -- is doing well. We also recognize that policy mistakes made in Washington cannot be corrected in Madison. The final section of this document contains some suggestions as to how Congress can help rural Wisconsin in three critical policy areas: dairy, the environment, and health care.

We regard this document as the opening lines in a dialogue with the people of rural Wisconsin. No pledge or promise we can make is more important than this one: that with Republicans as the majority party in the Assembly, rural interests will be considered and rural voices heard.

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Wisconsin's character and tradition are bound up in the rural areas of our state. Source of recreation, site of history and support of two of the state's largest industries -- agriculture and tourism -- rural Wisconsin must be healthy for the good of the state as a whole.

Recognizing this, the Assembly Republican Caucus has attempted a survey of the condition, problems and opportunities facing the largest part of our state.

Over the last six months, under the leadership of Representatives Ott and Ainsworth, Assembly Republicans have solicited ideas from community leaders throughout the state. Caucus members have met to discuss concerns that rural Wisconsinites have raised with them. And, the Republican leadership has given careful consideration to the likely impact of the Legislature's last session on rural residents and rural industries.

What follows is the product of that survey, a general guide to the direction Assembly Republicans feel the state government needs to take on issues important to rural Wisconsin. To ensure that the ideas discussed here, and others raised by rural Wisconsinites, get proper consideration in the next session of the Legislature, Assembly Republicans pledge to take two steps at the beginning of the next session. Should we Republicans become the majority party, we will:

* Create separate committees for Agriculture and Rural Development. While these areas are closely related in some ways, they are very different in others. Development programs impacting small towns are more efficiently considered separately from programs aimed at enhancing farm profitability.

* Install a farmer as chairman of the Agriculture Committee. It is time we had as Agriculture Committee Chairman someone who has had first-hand experience with farmers' problems before coming to Madison. A Republican Chairman of the Agriculture Committee will lead the way in ensuring that the Assembly looks at farm issues from a farmers' perspective.

As Republicans, we believe effective and responsible government begins with an accurate understanding of people's problems and a realistic understanding of what state government can and cannot do to solve them.

Wisconsin has outstripped the nation as a whole in job creation and economic growth. To a large degree, rural Wisconsin has shared in that success. As of July, not only was the statewide unemployment rate lower than the national rate, but so were the unemployment rates in all but 9 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. Some sectors of the rural economy face serious difficulties -- but most of the state is doing well.

In addition, many of the most vexing problems faced by rural Wisconsinites are the result of federal, not state, government policy. Dairy policy, burdensome environmental regulations and the continuing uncertainty over health care reform are prominent examples. Assembly Republicans are pleased to offer guidance to Wisconsin's Congressional delegation as to what the state needs from the federal government, but Caucus members recognize that policy mistakes by Washington cannot be corrected in Madison.

What, then, is the proper role of state government in the life of rural Wisconsin? It is, first, to recognize that economic prosperity in rural areas can never be taken for granted. Second, state government should understand that a small amount of help can go a long way. Finally, state government must think ahead.

NEVER TAKE RURAL PROSPERITY FOR GRANTED

The sparse population and relative remoteness of rural small towns and villages often forces them to depend on just one or two industries. In Wisconsin this usually means agriculture or, increasingly, tourism. With the lack of a diversified employment base comes increased vulnerability both to cyclical economic downturns and to chronic difficulties in a key industry, such as the Wisconsin dairy industry has struggled with for the last few years.

State government does not cause such downturns and difficulties and cannot always act effectively to cure them. What state government can do is be aware of the added pressure an excessive tax burden places on agriculture, on which so much of Wisconsin's rural economy depends. Relieving that pressure through effective and lasting property tax relief is the single most important step the Legislature can take to bolster the rural economy of our state.

Though property tax relief is the most significant issue for the rural economy, there are others as well. Changes in the

broader economy mean changes in the needs of rural communities, to which state government must respond. Three key examples of this are:

* An aging population means more retirees moving away from cities and larger towns to rural areas, thus changing these areas' health care needs. As Glen E. Grady of Memorial Medical Center in Neillsville wrote in his response to the Assembly Republicans' survey, "Seniors tend to retire in communities with readily available primary health care."

* In an era when businesses and schools are taking advantage of rapid advances in telecommunications technology, steps are needed to ensure that rural Wisconsinites have the same access to that technology as residents of urban areas.

* For rural industries to maintain access to existing markets and obtain access to new ones, they have got to have good roads -- and this inevitably means some new construction. The debate over whether mass transit is preferable to more highway construction is largely irrelevant in rural Wisconsin.

While differing from Democrats in our belief that activist, intrusive government should never be the remedy of first resort, Republicans understand that rural Wisconsin has transportation and other needs that only government can supply.

A LITTLE HELP CAN GO A LONG WAY

Supplying rural needs does not always require large and expensive programs. The truth is that economic development in rural areas requires vigorous, committed local leadership. Without such leadership, no amount of outside assistance is likely to have lasting results.

Responding to our survey, Iron County Extension Agent Cathy Teichman writes that "...what seems to work best for economic development is a grassroots approach...supported by input and resources from the state." And from Manitowoc County, Extension Agent Mark Kohrell says simply, "Those communities who were and are currently successful are the ones who have leaders."

In the last few years, many rural Wisconsin communities have shown that a relatively small amount of encouragement, technical advice and, when needed, financial assistance from the State can put a sound economic development plan "over the top."

Faced with the challenges of regional shopping centers, a troubled farm sector, and threatened downtown businesses, rural towns throughout Wisconsin have mobilized to plan their economic future.

* The Main Street Program has been utilized effectively by larger, and some smaller rural communities throughout the state. The structure of the program and the local involvement required to make it work effectively has begun revitalizing downtowns in places like Antigo, Park Falls and Tigerton. Antigo's Main Street organization will provide \$1.2 million in value-added services to the community, on a budget of only \$75,000.

The Main Street Program was budgeted at only \$456,000 for the 1991-93 biennium. During this period, according to the Department of Development, Wisconsin's 20 Main Street communities attracted 267 new downtown businesses, along with \$60 million in private investment and almost 1500 jobs.

* Rural Economic Development (RED) grants to local businesses are addressing what the Caucus survey of rural leaders identified as a key obstacle to job creation: the availability of capital. The Caucus survey received many favorable comments about this program, along with some criticisms which are discussed in the section on Economic Development.

* The Community-Based Economic Development (CBED) program has made grants and loans to local and county governments and small businesses to encourage economic diversification and the development of small business incubators.

Created in 1990, the CBED program got high marks from Caucus survey respondents for its flexibility and the variety of projects it has assisted, ranging from a marketing study for a Richland Center bakery considering expansion to management assistance for a new restaurant in Black River Falls. Director Jerry Chasteen of the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission in Eau Claire calls CBED "...extremely vital for rural development. Many communities in west central and northwestern Wisconsin have utilized these funds."

The CBED program was budgeted at just over \$1.58 million for the 1993-95 biennium.

Assembly Republicans support increases in funding for these proven programs within the context of overall fiscal restraint. Even more timely than funding increases would be administrative changes to make grant and loan application forms easier for small businesspeople and rural volunteer leadership to process.

The point to emphasize is that the jobs created and downtowns revitalized with the help of these programs are only secondarily achievements of state government. They are first of all achievements of local leadership, to which the state government has contributed with compact and carefully designed assistance.

Assembly Republicans stand ready to be a strong partner to local leadership in improving state economic development programs in any way we can.

THINK AHEAD

The last obligation of state government is to think ahead, to try to visualize economic conditions five to ten years down the road and, to the extent possible, prepare people for them. The application of this principle in such areas as highway planning and the telecommunications bill passed by the Legislature in the last session is too obvious to require extended discussion here.

The less obvious areas that matter to rural areas ought to matter to state government. For example:

* Agricultural diversification. In 1992, 57% of Wisconsin farm cash receipts came from the sale of milk. While this is close to the historic pattern in Wisconsin, it doesn't mean that things aren't changing.

The smaller number of dairy farms today means those farm dollars turn over less frequently in local communities. On the

outskirts of rapidly growing cities, higher value farm products can help keep some land in agricultural use. According to the 1994 Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics, the two fastest growing product groups in agriculture over the last five years were in non-traditional areas -- greenhouse and nursery products and poultry other than chickens.

State government can and should encourage non-traditional farm industries as they develop. This can mean major initiatives like encouraging an ethanol production facility to locate in Wisconsin - or modest steps like giving the Agriculture Department rather than the DNR authority to regulate deer farming on enclosed sites.

* New farmers. The average age of Wisconsin dairy farmers is over 50, and many farmers are unable to turn over the farm to their children as has long been traditional. The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection should be commended for its efforts to match beginning Wisconsin farmers with older farmers contemplating retirement through the Exit/Entry program.

But still more must be done. Beginning farmers necessarily start with very limited capital -- not nearly enough to modernize the obsolete facilities that are all they can often afford to buy. At the same time, there are a number of farmers in other areas of the country who have been prompted to sell because of rapidly rising land prices. Some of these farmers have capital, and they

need to be told of the advantages of starting over in Wisconsin.

Kansas and other states that compete with Wisconsin in the national dairy market are seeking this type of farmer. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture must match their efforts, both for the sake of our state's long-term competitive position and the many older Wisconsin farmers who will very shortly need to have someone they can sell their farms to.

* Energy efficiency. The low energy prices that America has enjoyed for the last several years will not last indefinitely. Unlike the 1970s, when oil prices jumped because of political decisions that could be reversed, the 1990s are seeing a rapid growth in global energy use as a result of economic growth in the developing world.

While this growth is fundamentally good news, we must face the prospect that world energy supplies will not increase as quickly as world energy use over the next several years -- and probably for longer than that.

This in turn means higher energy prices, and suggests that state government needs to get serious about energy efficiency. Ground-source heat pumps (or GHPs), which use the heat-absorbing properties of the earth to provide low-cost heating in winter and cooling in summer, are being aggressively promoted by utilities and state governments in Indiana, Oklahoma and other states. Oregon has used GHPs to heat and cool some public buildings since the late 1940s. For technical reasons, GHPs are especially well-suited to rural areas.

Wisconsin has thus far lagged behind in using GHPs to improve statewide energy efficiency, in part because of the Public Service Commission's single-minded promotion of natural gas as the preferred alternative to electricity. But this lost ground can be made up.

As a first step, the Legislature should direct the Department of Administration to conduct trials with GHPs in a small number of state buildings.

If the steps called for above, and in the rest of this report, do not together resemble a Grand Strategy for rural Wisconsin's future, that is quite deliberate. Rural Wisconsin is too diverse, and the power of the state government too limited, for elaborate strategies to be of much use.

Instead, Assembly Republicans view the steps called for here as the opening lines in a dialogue with the residents of rural Wisconsin, about their future and that of our entire state. No

pledge, no promise we Republicans could make about what we would do as the majority party in the Assembly next year has more significance than this: that the interests of rural Wisconsinites will be addressed, and their voices heard.

PROPERTY TAXES

The Legislature took a great and momentous step in the last session by mandating that Wisconsin move away from reliance on the property tax to fund our schools. The historic shift to other sources of revenue to fund two-thirds of education costs is the first and most necessary step toward ensuring the future vitality of rural Wisconsin communities.

The interest of rural Wisconsin communities is in seeing full implementation of the property tax cut, without diversion or delay.

Following-up the Legislature's action will require a thorough reappraisal of state government spending, and consideration of alternate revenue sources as well. It is vital that what rural Wisconsin has gained through property tax reduction not be lost in this follow-up.

Specifically, this means:

* We must preserve agriculture's historic exemptions for machinery, equipment and other production inputs like fuel, feed and fertilizer. The reason for this is practicality, not tradition. Agriculture is a capital-intensive industry, the only large industry many areas of Wisconsin can expect to sustain -- and farmers, unlike most other businesses, have no way to pass along increased costs to consumers.

The Coalition of Wisconsin Agriculture, a statewide group of farm organizations, correctly observes that:

"Production inputs used for crop and livestock operations must remain exempt from the sales tax because these inputs are comparable to sales tax exempt inputs used by other manufacturing industries."

* Assembly Republicans support use value assessment for farmland. Assessment at highest use value places an unwarranted burden on farmers. Just as important, it complicates local land use planning for orderly growth by putting pressure on farmers to sell out as soon as their land becomes attractive for development. The Land Use section of this report discusses this idea in more detail.

* Other suggestions that have been made to make property taxes fairer to rural Wisconsinites need to be evaluated in the light of the Legislature's action. Because this action will only reduce, not eliminate, property taxes, we cannot dismiss such ideas as reform of the Farmland Preservation Program and expansion of Farmland Tax Credits.

* Assembly Republicans insist on the need to maintain the spending and revenue caps enacted by the Legislature. To backslide in any way on this point would undo all the progress that has been made toward lessening the burden of property taxes on all Wisconsin taxpayers. We simply can no longer afford to allow local government spending to drive statewide taxation.

CONTROLLING SPENDING

Controlling overall state government spending is central to nearly everything Assembly Republicans want state government to do in the next few years. Without vigorous efforts to reduce spending, property tax relief can only be achieved at the unacceptable cost of massive increases in other taxes.

Assembly Republicans advocate an approach to state spending governed by the principle of zero-based budgeting. It has been argued that perhaps the most powerful force in government is inertia -- the tendency to do things the way they have always been done. This can mean preserving programs simply because they have always been there, long after their usefulness has ended. Certainly there are many examples of this in the federal budget.

Under zero-based budgeting, each state agency would be required to justify each of its programs, not just the changes it proposes to make in those programs as is now the case.

It will not do to overstate the likely impact of this step. Almost 80% of the state budget is composed of aids to local governments and direct payments to individuals under Medicaid, AFDC, and other federal and state programs. There is no line-item in the budget for waste, fraud and abuse; there is no such thing as a painless spending cut.

But before the Legislature asks Wisconsin taxpayers to shoulder the burden of making up lost property tax revenues, it has an obligation to examine all state spending from the ground up. Only in this way can we ensure that taxes are as low as we can make them.

LAND USE

Land use planning is a key issue for many Wisconsin communities, especially those enjoying economic growth. The natural tendency, when a local economy is doing well, to site a new or expanded business wherever that business wants to go, is often the path of least resistance to a local government in the short term.

This tendency's cumulative effect, though, can be to encourage unsightly sprawl, traffic congestion, strain on public services, and other urban problems. Making Wisconsin towns better places to work shouldn't make them less attractive places to live.

Discouraging growth is undesirable; mandating comprehensive land use planning at the state level is neither desirable nor practicable. The state can, however, do a number of things to encourage land use planning that makes sense for the diversity of communities in Wisconsin. These can include:

* Taxing farmland at its value for agriculture, rather than its highest use value.

Some farmland around rapidly growing cities like Madison, Green Bay and Appleton is going to be developed -- farmers will not continue forever to grow corn on land they can sell for several times what they paid for it. What use value taxation can do is reduce the tax pressure on farmers to sell immediately, thus giving local governments extra time to plan development and preserve open spaces in growing areas. Most states already use a use-value assessment system in some form.

* Providing technical assistance to communities that want to plan development of their downtown areas, through the Main Street and other programs.

Declining downtowns weaken the sense of community that is one of the most attractive features of life in rural Wisconsin -- when coupled with unplanned commercial development on a town's outskirts the result can be more tangible problems like increased automobile traffic. Some smaller communities reported difficulty raising the local financial resources needed to use the Main Street Program to plan growth. But our survey got more comments like those of Peter Dahm, Community Development Director of River Falls:

"I can honestly say that the Main Street Program here in River Falls remains vital and has been instrumental in making many physical changes in our downtown area, both to public and private property, and has been a stabilizing force within the Business District."

* In addition to technical assistance, the state can aid local planners with information.

"The Wisconsin Department of Revenue has refused to release municipal-level sales data, which hampers local trade area analysis," according to Shawano County Extension Agent James Resick. This is a persistent complaint from the Extension agents who work with rural communities on planning and economic development projects.

While business confidentiality concerns must be respected, DOR needs to recognize that responsible planning begins when local governments have a clear picture of the local economy -- and retail sales information is essential to forming such a picture.

Assembly Republicans will be prepared to consider legislation on this subject in the next session, but hope this will not be necessary.

Finally, many Assembly Republicans have heard constituents express irritation about the removal of land from local property tax rolls. One of the most resented sources of such removal is the purchase of land by Indian tribes, using proceeds from gaming.

The removal of land from local property tax rolls can greatly increase the burden on rural residents of paying for needed government services. The tribes' tax-exempt status and predominance in the Wisconsin gaming industry increases the exasperation felt in rural Wisconsin over land purchased with gambling revenues. However, while anecdotal information about this problem is widespread, no attempt has been made to systematically assess its extent, and recommend a solution.

Assembly Republicans intend to ask the Department of Revenue to assess the impact on local governments of removing land from property tax rolls. This assessment should consider removal resulting from land purchases by Indian tribes, as well as other causes.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Planning for growth is useless without the growth. Economic development in rural areas can take many forms. It can result from improvements in the farm economy, the desire of retired people for a rural lifestyle, or improvements in the public infrastructure.

Tourism has lately been the driving source behind economic development in many parts of rural Wisconsin. Our state's natural beauty, magnificent scenery, many lakes, and year-round recreational opportunities have drawn a rising tide of visitors from neighboring states and around the nation.

Wisconsin's guests have brought dollars to rural Wisconsin communities from Door County to the Dells and from Superior to Shawano. Wisconsin tourism has become a \$5.5 billion industry. It has brought jobs to areas that cannot easily support any other industries, and has been the economic salvation of many small communities, especially in the northern part of our state.

But tourism is not the answer for all rural Wisconsin communities. Wisconsin has made large, quick gains by promoting tourism, but must work at other kinds of economic development a little at a time.

Many rural towns have suffered in recent years from the troubles in the farm economy and the rise of large discount retail stores that tend to be located outside of downtown areas. The state can help with carefully targeted assistance to the small businesses that provide most of the jobs in rural Wisconsin.

The Assembly Republicans' survey of rural leaders produced many favorable comments about the Main Street, Community-Based Economic Development (CBED) and Rural Economic Development (RED) grants, and other state programs.

There was also some criticism of RED program restrictions that, for example, permitted grants to fund plans for expansion but not always the expansion itself; applications that were cumbersome to fill out for businesspeople unused to working with government; and terms that made it difficult for businesses not facing pressing financial distress to obtain assistance.

In short, the Caucus survey suggested that the RED program could be improved by making it easier to use and expanding the number of things it can be used for. The Caucus intends to pursue the needed changes through legislation next year.

The state government should also look at encouraging new industries to take root in rural areas. Energy-related industries are one possibility.

Wisconsin imports the vast majority of the energy it uses. While this is inevitable for a state without large resources of oil, coal or natural gas, rural Wisconsin has energy sources that should be developed. One of these is ethanol.

Ethanol, made from corn and certain other crops, is a clean-burning, renewable fuel. According to the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, increasing the use of ethanol in gasoline could help alleviate air pollution in urban areas. Increased ethanol use would also provide another market for corn, meaning higher and more stable prices for corn producers.

Though it is a major corn-producing state, Wisconsin has no major ethanol production facilities. An ethanol plant in southwestern Wisconsin could draw on a plentiful supply of Wisconsin corn as well as corn from nearby states. A study prepared last year for the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection estimated that Wisconsin could support a plant producing up to 200 million gallons of ethanol.

Assembly Republicans believe encouraging the construction of an ethanol production plant in Wisconsin should be an economic development priority for the state government.

RURAL HEALTH CARE ACCESS

The Caucus's survey of rural health care providers indicated widespread concern about the future availability of physicians and other health care professionals in rural areas.

Daniel Manders of the Mile Bluff Medical Center in Mauston writes that the big difference between his facility's situation in the 1970s and today is physician supply. Dennis Tomczyk of The Monroe Clinic observes that

"It is difficult to recruit primary care and specialty care physicians because 60-70% of these physicians choose to establish their practice in a metropolitan area."

This is not a new problem, especially for people in more remote areas. Nor would it do to overstate the case -- there are not now large numbers of rural Wisconsin residents barred from needed health care services because there are no doctors available. Not being faced with a crisis now, however, is no reason for state government to wait until there is one.

There is reason for concern about the future. The national trend for some time has been for medical students to gravitate toward medical specialties rather than family practice. In addition, the skyrocketing cost of malpractice insurance is chief among several factors deterring physicians from the practice of obstetrics.

These national trends have led to an increase in the number of federally-designated Health Professional Shortage Areas (regions with a ration of more than 3,500 residents to every one primary care physician) from 20 in 1980 to 54 this year. Most of these so-called HPSAs are in rural Wisconsin.

Wisconsin has one program in place directed at this problem. The Physician Loan Assistance Program (PLAP), offers physicians and other health care professionals assistance in repaying medical school loans in return for their agreement to serve in medically underserved areas of the state. To date, 53 primary care physicians have been granted awards under this program, most of whom have ended up serving in rural areas. The Legislature last year authorized a similar program offering assistance to nurses, physician assistants, and certified nurse midwives. This program should begin making awards by next spring.

While these programs by themselves cannot fill the need for health care in rural Wisconsin, PLAP has been successful thus far. The Caucus is prepared to consider seriously the expansion of both

programs to encourage more health care professionals to practice in rural areas.

TRANSPORTATION

An undercurrent to most of the material the Caucus collected in its survey of rural leaders is the necessity of an adequate infrastructure. No element of infrastructure is more essential to rural economic growth than good, dependable roads.

Farmers and manufacturers seeking access to markets, resort and other communities in search of tourist dollars, and rural residents in need of health care and public services all depend on the road network. In densely-populated areas it may be possible to plan for alternatives to highway transportation. In rural areas it is not. Nor would it be prudent to proceed with a statewide transportation plan that assumed the entire state shared the air quality problems of southeastern Wisconsin.

While the Department of Transportation is proceeding on a number of worthwhile construction projects, the Caucus considers two among them to have special importance for rural Wisconsin. These are the conversion of Highway 29 between Green Bay and I-94 into a four-lane highway, and the completion of Route 151 between Columbus and Fond du Lac. Timely completion of these already enumerated projects would have especially beneficial effects on rural development opportunities in large areas of our state.

In addition, the Caucus calls for the Transportation Projects Commission to give the completion of USH 151 between Dickeyville and Belmont, in southwestern Wisconsin, the highest priority among possible future projects. This is a Corridors 2020 Backbone route in a heavily agricultural part of Wisconsin now remote from four-lane thru highways.

Important as major highways are, of course, most rural residents depend for everyday transportation on local roads. Translinks 21, the Department of Transportation's long-range plan for Wisconsin's transportation infrastructure, proposes substantial increases in local road aids. These increases would come in the form of higher per-mile reimbursement, higher shared cost aids and larger contributions to the Local Road Improvement Program.

While specific funding levels will need to be worked out over time, Assembly Republicans endorse Translinks 21's push toward higher local road aids.

ENVIRONMENT

Regulatory agencies are never popular. While regulation in general -- of financial institutions, working conditions, or actions affecting the environment -- is usually supported by the public, the application of specific regulations often is not.

Caucus members from rural Wisconsin have received much comment from their constituents on this subject, most of it directed at the Department of Natural Resources. There is a strong sense that environmental laws and regulations should not be enacted with the assumption that they will have no impact on the value of private property.

The idea of requiring the state government to pay compensation whenever a regulatory action negatively impacts the value of property owned by a farmer or other rural resident has also been raised. This idea has profound implications, since nearly everything government does affects the value of someone's property in some way -- both positively and negatively.

Determining which cases call for compensation would involve great difficulty, as would raising the funds needed to pay compensation claims. There is also this question: if some environmental objective -- preserving wetlands, or attaining a certain level of water quality -- is thought unimportant, is it preferable to amend the relevant laws to say that, or keep the lofty goals while making them impossible to achieve?

Philosophy aside, the truth is that most of the environmental regulations DNR has to enforce are based on federal law. State action impeding enforcement of the Clean Water Act or other federal legislation would not survive court challenge.

What can be done is to raise awareness that environmental laws do have consequences for property rights and values. To do this, Assembly Republicans propose to:

Establish a Property Rights Impact Office in the Department of Agriculture that would be charged with doing an assessment of the impact on property values of environmental legislation and regulations.

Rather than making this office a permanent addition to the state bureaucracy, it should be established for a two-year period. In addition to submitting a comprehensive report to the Legislature on property rights in Wisconsin at the end of that time, the Property Rights Impact Office would be authorized to testify before the Legislature on the impact on property rights of new state

environmental legislation.

Related to the issue of the laws DNR is given to enforce is the way that enforcement is carried out. The same things this report notes in the section on federal policy with respect to federal environmental policy applies at the state level too: command-and-control regulation is not enough.

Much progress has already been made by both DNR and DATCP in providing outreach, technical assistance, and in some cases financial help to farmers seeking to comply with regulations related to water quality, non-point source pollution, disposal of hazardous materials, and other problems. More remains to be done.

Environmental regulations usually have deadlines for compliance; to meet these deadlines, farmers must be able to get clear, accurate, and timely answers to their questions from state personnel who understand their situation. Too often they cannot -- and too often they are subject to regulation from more than one agency.

Lack of inter-agency communication often leaves the regulated community caught in the middle and is the source of much irritation throughout rural Wisconsin. The Assembly Republicans recognize that this problem is better addressed through administrative action than through legislation, but will consider legislation if progress is not made.

State environmental regulators must be required to be familiar with all the regulations rural Wisconsinites have to comply with, not just the ones each regulator is directly responsible for.

Enforcing this requirement will be a burden on DNR, DATCP, and other state agencies. It is necessary to make state regulators appreciate the burden the private sector faces from a multitude of environmental regulation.

Federal Policy: Is Anybody Listening?

Residents of rural Wisconsin are not the only people to express frustration at the length of time it takes for Congress to address pressing issues. The Caucus recognizes the complexity of such fields as health care and environmental policy -- and how difficult it is to legislate at the national level without strong, decisive Presidential leadership.

While the nation waits for Congress, though, real needs go unaddressed, and problems can become crises. Several cases in point directly impact rural Wisconsin. Accordingly, the Caucus implores Congress to act in the following areas:

Dairy Policy

What experts predicted years ago has happened: Wisconsin's dairy industry is fighting for its life. Federal dairy policies that encourage expansion of both production and processing capacity in Texas, California and other states have caused prices to stagnate here. The Wisconsin industry's market share -- over 18% of the nation's milk production in 1983 -- has slumped to about 15%. The number of Wisconsin dairy farm families forced to leave the industry continues to rise.

The Clinton Administration has fought attempts in federal court to bring milk marketing orders in line with modern economic realities. Since dramatically worsening the situation by raising guaranteed fluid milk prices for southern dairy farmers in 1985, Congress has folded its arms and done nothing.

Wisconsin, and the Upper Midwest generally, has more dairy farmers than any place else in America. Nowhere else in America is dairy more important to a state's economy than it is here in Wisconsin. If federal dairy programs are not helping Wisconsin dairy farmers, there is no reason to have them at all.

The Assembly Republican Caucus questions whether federal milk marketing orders have not outlived their usefulness. At a minimum, the Caucus calls on Congress to establish one uniform minimum fluid milk price in all areas covered by federal orders.

Environmental policy

It appears as if Congress will again fail to reauthorize either the Clean Water Act or the Safe Drinking Water Act this year. Farmers, rural businesses, and local governments are all regulated under these laws, and compliance is an increasingly difficult challenge.

When Congress first began passing environmental legislation in the 1970's, the focus was on a relatively small number of large industries and other pollution sources. Congress took the view that these sources had the resources in money and know-how to reduce the pollution they caused if EPA told them to do so. As a result, federal environmental legislation has tended to emphasize enforcement and prescriptive regulation.

This approach has been successful in many ways, especially where the Clean Water Act is concerned. But today's pollution problems -- especially in rural areas -- are very different from those we have addressed so far.

First, solving rural water quality problems means regulating a large number of small pollution sources, not a small number of large pollution sources. Much pollution of rural waters does not come from the end of a pipe, but from so-called non-point sources -- mostly farms.

Detailed regulation and swift punishment for violators is not the best way to address rural water quality problems. What is needed instead is outreach and technical assistance by EPA, DNR, and other government agencies to show farmers the most effective ways of reducing harmful pollution from farm facilities.

Farmers care about their land and the water on and around it; most respond positively to suggestions on how to improve the local environment. Regulation and enforcement should be reserved for the minority who don't.

Second, small rural communities find it harder to address water quality problems than larger towns and cities. The small size of their tax base makes it difficult or impossible for them to fund major projects to treat wastewater or purify drinking water to the degree called for in federal regulations.

In many cases technical assistance may help some rural communities to find less expensive ways to secure clean water. However, many smaller rural communities will not be able to provide their residents with the clean water they deserve without financial assistance from Washington.

It is essential that some provision for such assistance be incorporated in both the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Acts when Congress acts next year to reauthorize these laws.

Third and finally, there is not vastly more pollution in rural America than there was 25 years ago. However, there is vastly more pollution control regulation for rural Americans to comply with.

Congress deals with environmental issues one at a time. There

is separate legislation for surface water pollution, drinking water, hazardous waste, clean air and a variety of other environmental problems. In the organizational train wreck that is the Democratic House of Representatives, the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Acts are the province of two separate committees that share no members and no staff.

Laws are passed -- and implemented by EPA -- as if each law were the only one farmers, small business owners and local governments had to comply with. State agencies like Wisconsin's DNR are directed to implement federal laws and given a fraction of the money they need to do it properly. The cumulative burden of federal environmental mandates on the private sector and local governments is actually beginning to undermine public support for laws protecting the environment.

Reform is needed if Congress is interested to doing more than posturing to protect the environment. This means:

ORGANIZATIONAL REFORM:

* Environmental legislation should be made the responsibility of just one House Committee, not several of them.

* Congress should require federal regulators to be familiar with all the laws and rules that the private sector and local governments have to comply with, not just the few each regulator is directly responsible for.

SUBSTANTIVE REFORM:

* Rural local governments would find it less costly and difficult to comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act if it were amended to focus on contaminants known to be harmful to people, as opposed to chemicals known to be harmful to laboratory mice if consumed in massive quantities.

* When Congress directs state agencies to enforce federal law, it must provide them with enough federal money to do a good job.

Health care policy

Rural Wisconsinites have the same health care needs as other people. They should have the same access to health care as other people.

This principle should guide the Wisconsin Congressional Delegation as it considers reform of our national health care system. Most people in rural Wisconsin have access to excellent health care now; some do not, and the overall cost of that care is

and should be a cost of continuing concern.

Beyond these basic principles are many complex questions as to how to maintain the quality of care, expand access to it, and control and ultimately reduce its cost. In its survey of rural health care providers, the Caucus found strong concern about:

* The adequacy of Medicare reimbursements to rural hospitals. Most rural hospitals lack access to a large number of privately-insured patients to whom costs can be shifted if Medicare reimbursement proves inadequate. The growing proportion of elderly in parts of rural Wisconsin make this an especially serious problem for some hospitals.

* Difficulty in attracting primary care physicians and other health care professionals to rural areas. Elsewhere in this report the Caucus suggests a means for the state government to encourage more doctors to serve rural Wisconsin. While replacement of expensive diagnostic and other medical equipment is a concern, rural health care providers seem to worry less about the adequacy of their facilities than about the future supply of doctors.

* The growth of "hub and spokes" provider networks, in which the many hospitals throughout Wisconsin establish referral relationships with rural doctors and clinics. Many health care providers welcome these networks as an efficient way to provide affordable care to a dispersed population. Others see large health care systems posing a threat both to people's ability to choose their own doctor and to local control of local hospitals. As Paul A. Miller, President of Memorial Hospital in Burlington, notes:

"Clearly we would prefer to have health decisions affecting the Burlington community be made in Burlington and not in some distant city."

In addition, a continuing concern is the fact that farmers still cannot deduct the full cost of their health insurance on their federal income tax. Farming is not only an absolutely necessary occupation but a relatively hazardous one -- farmers' insurance premiums tend therefore to be high. Yet Congress continues to act as if making farmers' insurance premiums deductible was some kind of special favor to agriculture.

Congressional action was necessary to extend the 25% deductibility of health insurance premiums for farmers and other self-employed people. By doing nothing at all on health care reform, Congress and the Clinton Administration have let that limited deductibility expire. It is just this kind of careless disregard for people's everyday problems that make many wonder if Congress listens to what its Members hear from their constituents.

A variety of factors alter the functioning of market forces in the health care field, not least of which is government's already prominent role through Medicare, Medicaid and other programs. But concern over continued access and rising costs is forcing changes in the health care system, and will continue to do so whether Congress ever acts on health care reform or not.

The rapid pace of these changes, and the many strengths of the existing health care system, strongly suggests that gradual reform of the system's most obvious faults would have been the most prudent course for Congress to take this year. No one in rural Wisconsin gains by the continuing uncertainty as to whether Washington is about to turn the whole system upside down.

The Assembly Republican Caucus urges Congress to look on reform of the health care system -- fully one-seventh of the nation's economy -- as an ongoing work in progress. Congress should begin by addressing the problems on which most people can agree, such as ensuring portability of health insurance and coverage for pre-existing conditions.

The debate over how to arrive at universal health care coverage will take more time, as any debate over such a difficult and complex subject ought to. The need to reduce the overall cost of care to the economy should never leave Congress's agenda, however long the debate over health care reform lasts.

In conclusion, Assembly Republicans are aware that rural Wisconsin's needs are not the only things Congress has seemed unresponsive to in recent years. Such unresponsiveness has come to be identified with Congress as an institution -- but it might better be recognized as inevitable when the party that controls Congress knows it will continue to do so whether the people's business gets done or not.

The Democrats have controlled the Senate for the last eight years. Incredibly, they have controlled the House of Representatives since the elections of 1954. Any party controlling a legislature for that long develops a sense of entitlement, a deep-rooted belief that it deserves power because it has always had it. If Congress seems as if it isn't listening, perhaps that is because its Members think they don't need to.

October 14, 1994

Dear Rural Wisconsin Survey Participant:

This past May, we asked you to tell us what you viewed as the unique challenges facing rural Wisconsin. As we explained, the Republican Assembly Caucus is interested in promoting and maintaining economic viability and quality of life for rural residents.

We received 72 responses from the 349 requests mailed. Many of the responses contained similar ideas. Other concerns and suggestions were parochial to a specific group. However, all the shared concerns and ideas were considered and many were included in the Assembly Republican Agenda for Rural Wisconsin.

In July, Republican Assembly Caucus members received summaries of the 72 responses. Using the summaries as a basis, the caucus members spent a day exchanging ideas relating to rural Wisconsin. They also offered their own ideas, many of which came from constituent contacts or from first-hand experiences in agriculture or small business. The ideas were then prioritized by caucus members and became the foundation for the Assembly Republican Agenda for Rural Wisconsin.

The Agenda is the first-step toward establishment of an on-going commitment to rural Wisconsin. We hope you will read the enclosed 24-page document and notice that many of your ideas have been included. Please feel free to contact either of us if you have questions or additional suggestions as to how we can work together to best meet the needs of rural Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

ALVIN OTT
State Representative
3rd Assembly District

JOHN AINSWORTH
State Representative
6th Assembly District

Assembly Republican Agriculture & Rural Agenda Press Conferences

Tuesday, October 18th

Madison

9:30am - State Capitol, 2nd floor North hearing room
(Al & John)

Wednesday, October 19th

9:00am - Al Swiderski Implement, Inc.
Old Highway 51 North
Mosinee
(715) 693-3015
(Al)

10:00am - La Crosse City Hall
400 La Crosse Street
La Crosse
(608) 789-7599
**5th floor conference room
(John)

12:30pm - Raymond & Debbie Diederich Farm
521 Fernando Drive
De Pere
(414) 336-0942
**West out of De Pere on Hwy G. Hwy G automatically
turns into Fernando Drive. You do not have to make
any turns.
(Al)

2:00pm - Morrison Implement
Hwy 124
Chippewa Falls
(715) 723-2876
**Approximately 2.5 miles north of Chippewa Falls on
Hwy 124
(John)

2:30pm - Farm Credit Services
3962 N. Richmond
Appleton
(414) 739-3186
(Al)

-MORE-

4:30pm - Chief Equipment
2601 S. Washburn
Oshkosh
(414) 231-6251
**Intersection of Hwy 41 and Hwy 44
(Al)

F O R I M M E D I A T E R E L E A S E

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Rep. Al Ott (608) 266-5831

October 18, 1994

ASSEMBLY REPUBLICANS UNVEIL AGENDA FOR RURAL WISCONSIN

Madison...Assembly Republicans unveiled their Agenda for Rural Wisconsin Tuesday, pledging meaningful changes for the rural parts of our state.

Dane County Representatives Rick Skindrud, Gene Hahn, and Rudy Silbaugh, along with Assembly Republicans including John Ainsworth of Shawano, and Al Ott of Forest Junction, unveiled their Republican Agenda for Rural Wisconsin at a Capitol Press Conference Tuesday.

"The rural agenda is about more than just agricultural issues," said Rick Skindrud a dairy farmer from Mt. Horeb. "It sets the course for what the Legislature can and should do for all of rural Wisconsin."

The Agenda highlighted the direction Assembly Republicans believe state government must take to address the issues important to rural Wisconsin.

In the agenda, Republicans pledge to:

- * **Create separate committees for Agriculture and Rural Development.**
- * **Install a farmer as chair of the Assembly Agriculture Committee.**

"We cannot overlook the importance of rural economic development in our state," said Gene Hahn, a farmer from Cambria. "I am particularly interested the construction of an ethanol plant to help farmers and our environment."

Assembly Republicans also vowed to fight for:

- * **Full implementation of the property tax cut.**
- * **Continuing sales tax exemptions for farmers' machinery and equipment.**
- * **Zero-based budgeting for the state government.**
- * **Expansion of successful state rural economic development programs.**
- * **Continued and expanded state help for critical rural infrastructure needs.**
- * **Establishment of a Property Rights Impact Office in the Department of Agriculture.**

"It is time for state government to move in the right direction on rural issues," said Rudy Silbaugh. "Rural life is still the backbone of Wisconsin."

The Rural Agenda is a product of a survey which explored the condition, problems, and opportunities of the largest part of our state--rural Wisconsin.

"Our agenda puts the needs of rural Wisconsin at the top of our list of priorities--where it should be," said Al Ott, a farmer from Forest Junction and one of the agenda's primary architects.

-more-

Rural Agenda--Add One

Assembly Republicans are holding a series of press conferences around the state Tuesday and Wednesday of this week. The Agenda for Rural Wisconsin was also being discussed at press conferences in Hudson, Mosinee, La Crosse, Green Bay, Chippewa Falls, Appleton, and Oshkosh.



REPUBLICAN
AL OTT
for Assembly
COMMITTED TO WORKING TOGETHER

MEDIA ADVISORY

For further information contact: REPRESENTATIVE AL OTT (414) 989-1240

*Press conference schedule releasing the Assembly Republican Agriculture & Rural Agenda for the next two years. State Representative Al Ott will be available for comment at all of these sites.

*Wednesday, October 19th

9:00am Al Swiderski Implement, Inc.
Old Highway 51 North
Mosinee

12:30pm Raymond & Debbie Diederich Farm
521 Fernando Drive
De Pere

(Directions: West out of De Pere on Hwy G. Hwy G automatically turns into Fernando Drive - you don't have to make any turns.)

2:30pm Farm Credit Services
3962 N. Richmond
Appleton

4:30pm Chief Equipment
2601 S. Washburn
Oshkosh

(Intersection of Hwy 41 and Hwy 44)

You are invited and encouraged to attend any or all of these press conferences which are part of a series of events planned throughout the state on October 19th. The agenda that will be released is the result of approximately five months of work. State Representatives Al Ott (R-Forest Junction) and John Ainsworth (R-Shawano) led the efforts of the Assembly Republican Caucus in developing this agenda which involved contacting over 300 different organizations associated with either agriculture or the rural economy.

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P.O. Box 112

989-1240

Forest Junction, WI 54123

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Gaylord Unbehaon, Treasurer, Brillion, WI 54110

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@ include background sheet

MEDIA ADVISORY

For further information contact:
STATE REPRESENTATIVE ALVIN R. OTT
(608) 266-5831 or (414) 989-1240

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