

## Subordinates - info & fact finding

State agency people - DATCP, DOD, UW, DNR

Statewide Farm Organizations - FB, FU, NFO, GRANGE

Agri-Bus. Co., Corn Growers,

Hog Prod., Cattlemen Ass'n

Machinery dealer association

Veg. growers / Potato growers

Cranberry growers,

aquaculture

Rural Bus. issues -

Rural Electric Coops -

Others: Ed Jesse -

Bill Dobson - Bl. River Falls

Ron Schaefer - Ag. Econ.

Larry Benning - Veg.

Pete Nowak - UW - Rural Econ.

Jerry Campbell - Dick Barrows

Facts & what do we need to know  
to effectively present issues; agenda

Issue - areas

1. International

2. National

3. State

4. Local

Key General issue - areas:

1. Taxation

2. Environmental

3. Regulation (

4. Business Climate

5. Marketing (DATCP)

6. Consumer Protection (DATCP)

7. Labor pool -

8. Information Highway

9. Health Care -

10. Education / training

11. Consumer Education - Ag

12. Crime

Property Rights, (Wetlands Preservation Prog.)

Are we?  
the  
original group  
Process!

we need to

1. have Republicans talking to farmers
2. have

Create a survey type - response form  
from - affected legislators.

(26)

# Rural / Ag members

- ✓ Ainsworth
- ✓ Albers
- ✓ Brancel
- ✓ Brandemuehl
- ✓ Freese
- ✓ Gard
- ✓ Goetsch
- ✓ Hahn
- ✓ Harisdorf
- ✓ Johnson
- ✓ Klusman
- ✓ Lorge
- ✓ Musser
- ✓ Ott
- ✓ Othe
- ✓ Seratti
- ✓ Skindrud
- ✓ Ward
- ✓ Zukowski
- ✓ Lehman

Dan -  
 Al (+ J) thought the  
 below 6 legislators should  
 also be give the opportunity  
 to participate.  
 Thanks for your help (even  
 though you're leaning out on me!)  
 Kim

- ✓ Curada
- ✓ Welch
- ✓ Coleman
- ✓ Silbaugh
- ✓ Owens
- ✓ Deininger

~~Handwritten signature~~

Mtg. 8/8  
9:00am

## ASSEMBLY GOP RURAL AGENDA IN REVIEW

### RURAL AGENDA GOALS

### STATUS

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Separate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committees                                | Accomplished  |
| 2. Farmers As Committee Chairs  | Accomplished  |
| 3. Full Implementation of Property Tax Cut  | Accomplished  |
| 4. Retain Sales Tax Exemptions For Farmers  | Accomplished  |
| 5. Use-Value Assessment   | Accomplished  |
| 6. Zero-based Budgeting   | Vetoed  |
| <i>working w/ Sen + Dasee</i> (7.) Expansion of Rural Economic Development Programs | <i>? expand beyond 10,000</i> AB 437 Expands RED eligibility to communities with 10,000 |
| 8. Continued and Expanded State Help for Rural Infrastructure                       | Transportation Budget   |

9. CROP permanent

### OTHER ISSUES ADDRESSED WITHIN THE RURAL AGENDA

- John w/ Sec. Bugher*
1. Improved technical assistance for rural economic development
    - \* Require Department of Revenue to release municipal-level sales data.
    - ? \* Expand number of purposes for which RED grants or loans can be used.
  - ✓ 2. Incentive to encourage the construction of an ethanol production plant in Wisconsin.
    - \* Committee on Rural Affairs recommended AB 59 for passage.



resolve one problem - create another  
inter-agency cooperation + communication

memo to  
other legislators

3. Require regulators to know all regulation impacting rural Wisconsin

\* Assembly passed AB 264 requiring agencies to develop a scope of intent of proposed administrative rules.

4. Improved Rural Health Care and Incentives to Retain Physicians in Rural Communities.

? \* DOD (budget pg. 215)

Legislature approved a cut of \$119,500 from the Physicians Loan Assistance Program. Total funding for the PLAP is \$672,400.

- 1. How much of impact is cut
- 2. How successful
- 3. Are underserved areas being served

\* LRB 3789/1 (Rep. Freese) creates a rural medical center designation which will allow rural health care facilities the flexibility to restructure their health care delivery systems to best meet their communities' needs. *Licensing change*

OK

5. Encourage federal government to change the federal milk marketing system.

\* Assembly passed AJR 17 memorializing Congress and Secretary of Agriculture Glickman to change the current milk marketing system.

6. Creation of a Property Rights Impact Office in the Department of Administration

OTHER RURAL INITIATIVES NOT PART OF THE RURAL AGENDA

- 1. Property Rights Bill (Rep. Albers)
- 2. Right To Farm Bill (Rep. Klusman)
- 3. Strengthening of Agricultural Impact Statements (Rep. Albers)  
- working w/ DATCP

\* ✓ on Farmland Pres.

**BACKGROUND: NORTHEAST WISCONSIN**

1. GENERAL AGRICULTURE

Statewide: Wisconsin's cash receipts from farm marketings totaled \$5.5 billion in 1992. Over \$3.1 billion (57%) of that came from the sale of milk. \$4.3 billion (78.4%) came from livestock, including dairy; \$1.2 billion (21.6%) from crops.

Wisconsin was still No. 1 in milk production in 1992 (15.2% of U.S. production), but has been falling behind California in monthly production since August, 1993.

Wisconsin had 30,000 dairy farmers in 1993. Number of dairy farmers has declined by about 1,000 per year since 1989.

Northeast Wisconsin: Manitowoc County ranks 8th in milk marketings. Outagamie Co. ranks 10th, Shawano 11th, Brown 15th.

Source: Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics - 1994

2. LAND USE (re: use value assessment)

Statewide: Per acre value of agricultural land sold but remaining in agricultural use was \$815 in 1992. Value of agricultural land sold and diverted to non-agricultural use was \$1,245.

Northeast Wisconsin: Examples:

	<i>value of ag land sold + kept in ag use</i>	<i>value of ag land sold + diverted to non-ag use</i>	
Brown Co.:	1,042	2,948	183% → 182.9
Outagamie:	1,062	2,707	155% → 154.8
Manitowoc:	856	1,245	45% → 45.4
Shawano :	735	931	27% → 26.7
Kewaunee :	890	1,208	36% → 35.7
CALUMET J. :	920	1,122	23.0%

Moral: Use value assessment would make a much bigger difference in areas influenced by growing cities.

Source: Department of Revenue

3. QUOTES (from area survey respondents):

- a) Manitowoc Co. Extension Agent Mark Kohrell (p. 3)
- b) Shawano Co. Extension Agent James Resick (p. 12)

*Calumet County ranks 23rd*

\*

~

## Background: North Central Wisconsin

### 1. GENERAL AGRICULTURE

Statewide: Wisconsin's cash receipts from farm marketings totaled \$5.5 billion in 1992. Over \$3.1 billion (57%) of that came from the sale of milk, \$4.3 billion (78.4%) came from livestock, including dairy; \$1.2 billion (21.6%) from crops.

Wisconsin was still No. 1 in milk production in 1993 (15.2% of U.S. production), but has been falling behind California in monthly production since August, 1993.

Wisconsin had 30,000 dairy farmers in 1993. The number of dairy farmers has declined by about 1,000 per year since 1989.

North Central: Marathon County ranks 1st in milk marketings. Clark Co. ranks 2nd.

Marathon County had 3,240 farms with the average farm having 185.8 acres. Marathon County ranks 2nd in land under farming with 602,000 acres. Clark Co. ranks 4th with 470,000 acres.

The North Central region which incorporates Ashland, Clark, Iron, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Price, Taylor, and Vilas Counties had cash receipts of \$512 million for all commodities in 1992.

Source: Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics--1994

### 2. QUOTES (from area survey respondents):

- a) Memorial Medical Center, Neillsville, Glen E. Grady (p. 3)
- b) Shawano Co. Extension Agent James Resick (p. 12)



# Milk Pail

with  
Joel  
McNair

# Better Vision

Wisconsin's Dairy 2020 initiative always reminded me of that fancy cow that fetches a high price at the auction. You know — the one that shows up with a bad attitude, a bad case of mastitis, and ends up getting shipped early at 48 cents a pound. In other words, what looked good at first glance proved to be a loser.

Dairy 2020 lost at the state capitol last month largely because, in an election year, politicians were trying to top each other in being stingy with the purse strings. Whether the 2020 price tag was \$870,000 or \$400,000, those kinds of dollars were going to have a tough time gaining approval this year even if dairy farmers marched on the capitol to demand the program.

The second reason 2020 came up empty was that farmers did not march. In fact, backers in the legislature were deeply disturbed by the obvious lack of producer support for the initiative. If farmers didn't want it, why would politicians want to go to bat for a big-bucks program in an election year climate that simply will not reward lawmakers who vote to spend big bucks?

idea has merit, with changes

But 2020, as it was constructed, was doomed to gain only scattered, weak support from farmers. It was thus guaranteed to largely fail.

What was wrong with 2020? First, any initiative launched by Tommy Thompson and headed by the deans of the UW-Madison ag college and Extension, plus the state secretary of agriculture, was going to be perceived by many farmers as being more "top down" nonsense. This was going to be the case no matter how much spin-doctored "grass roots" was concocted by 2020 leaders.

Farmers had a right to be skeptical, because 2020 was indeed a political animal that spent much of its time positioning itself at the taxpayer feed trough. Cronies appeared out of nowhere as 2020 "staff." Program ideas viewed as being in conflict with 2020's hallowed "mission statement" were shooed away for fear of endangering the initiative's chances of gaining funds. All sorts of Madison-style, political cloak and dagger stuff was happening behind the scenes. Smart lawmakers who considered the request for \$870,000 saw little actual program merit in that plea. And, except for very limited areas, 2020 failed to manufacture any "grass roots" support.

It could not, and it will not. That's because the vast majority of Wisconsin dairy farmers are entirely fed up with the performance of taxpayer-funded institutions that are supposed to be "helping" them. Most dairy farmers I know do not feel the "problem" lies with themselves. They feel the "problem" comes from the desk jockeys who tell farmers that they aren't doing things right. Whether this belief is entirely right or wrong does not matter. What matters is that it is a strong feeling among the majority of Wisconsin farmers.

This does not necessarily mean that

## Should Go Back to Drawing Board

price of a pot of coffee and a plate of cookies supplied out of the current Extension budget. I hope that more of these councils form with the help of local agents and community leaders.

Second, the statewide 2020 coordinating council should be revamped. All "suits and ties" should be sent packing for the meantime. Instead, some fairly neutral party should select a panel of about eight "real" dairy farmers representing a variety of interests, ranging from rotational grazing to free stalls to specialty dairy marketing. No farm group presidents need apply. Ag dean Roger Wyse and ag secretary Alan Tracy would stay away until summoned by this group.

The farmers could agree to hold at least two meetings. They might try to deter-

mine what, if anything, a 2020 effort might offer. These people could address local council ideas. Just as importantly, they might analyze ways of improving current "help" agencies to better do the jobs they are supposed to be doing already. If the farmers decide they need technical help, they could then request it from the desk jockeys. If they want money from the capitol, they could summon Wyse and Tracy to carry the mail.

Knowing "real" farmers, I'll bet they could come up with some better ideas at a lower cost than those of the original, gold-plated 2020. Either that or, if they were getting nowhere, they'd agree to stop meeting and wasting their time after two or three sessions.

While they're out of the room, I think

Tracy, Wyse and Extension dean Ayse Somersan should do a little field research. For instance, approximately 15 local rotational grazing networks have formed around the state over the past three years. These farmer-driven groups many of which have no formal ties with Extension or anyone else, sponsor scores of pasture walks and meetings. I suggest that the mucky-mucks cancel a couple of their powwows, slip on some tall boots, and take a walk with these farmers. Just go and hear what happens when true "grass roots" people get excited about something and start talking with each other about it. Maybe these officials would learn something, and maybe 2020 could turn out to be something other than political nonsense.

means that  
to the draw-  
er have to  
ied pursuit  
ave the  
gs right.  
d 2020  
l remained  
initiative  
in in busi-  
ideas to  
odorifer-  
0 is that it  
ff that  
without  
\$870,000  
eet and  
as for the



The health-care debate is heating up as President Clinton, his cabinet members and some congressmen are on the stump for his proposals. The president has visited a number of cities and has received live television coverage in give-and-take sessions with citizens.

Also Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy did not miss any opportunities to mention health care during appearances before two large dairy cooperatives in recent weeks.

In addition, Sen. Herb Kohl, while visiting the state during the recent congressional Easter break, voiced his general support for the concept.

The issue also has been in the limelight at a number of spring meetings of farm organizations.

Where does all this take us?

Well, it boils down to the fact that residents of rural communities as well as farmers and ranchers will have to make sure their voices in this issue are heard.

Sen. Kohl in a visit to The Country Today office raised the issue that a health insurance policy is not much good if there is not quality health care available without traveling great distances.

Secretary Espy termed agriculture jobs as the most dangerous in America. And he said farmers are at a distinct disadvantage in receiving emergency health care because of the distance they are from assistance. Because of that and the dangers of the occupation, he said, farmers are strapped with higher insurance premiums.

We've heard of some farmers paying as much as \$6,000 to \$8,000 a year in premiums — if they can find someone to insure them.

Also it needs to be pointed out that farmers, because of the high risk, are in no position to negotiate with insurance companies over rates. By their occupation, farmers face an unusual amount of dust, endure loud noises and work around open equipment such as cutting bars, augers and other moving parts.

We are aware of farmers who ship only to certain cooperatives so they can participate in some sort of health-care program.

Statistics show that farmers, by a higher percentage, because of greater costs and lower spendable income, are less apt to have health insurance coverage.

Sen. Kohl did have praise for the great efforts that some clinics are making to deliver rural health care. However, he said farmers have to be covered by an insurance plan that allows them to participate in the expanding rural facilities that are linked to larger clinics through new communication technologies.

Mr. Espy suggested a pooling arrangement whereby farmers can join together to negotiate with insurance companies for a reasonable premium.

This of course will take great numbers. The Farm Bureau's Rural Insurance Program has been broadened by linking its insurance programs with Farm Bureau programs in other states to increase its members and base.

An effort is being made by some congressmen and senators to increase the amount of premium deductions for farmers and self-employed persons when filing income taxes. Sen. Kohl said the goal should be 100 percent, the same amount Secretary Espy said would be ideal. Legislation expected this year would make 60 percent of the premiums deductible.

In the meantime, farmers and ranchers must take every precaution they can to prevent injuries on the farm by performing safety checks and training employees and family members in safe operation of new equipment that does things faster.

Improvements in emergency responses have been taking place with a number of rescue squads undergoing training to handle farm accidents, including removing people from silos and extracting victims from farm machinery, and through the First Responder plan to rush qualified help to the accident scene as quickly as possible.

Sure, progress has been made in all these areas, but the bottom line is still that politicians, when designing a new health-care program, must not forget that people in rural America deserve the same health-care delivery system that their counterparts in the cities receive in a timely and affordable manner.

There are some elements in the health care proposals that are essential to rural people. They include that the health-care package be universal in its coverage, be affordable and cannot be taken away. It is hard to argue with those points.

Now the big question, as Sen. Kohl said, is "How to get there."

# discussed

## La Crosse

Wisconsin's dairy industry is facing many issues, including a decline in the total number of dairy farmers in the state. While the number of dairy producers leaving farming has remained fairly constant over time, fewer young people have been going into dairy farming in recent years.

The loss of dairy farmers and the difficulties in transferring farm ownership were among the topics addressed at the Dairy Future Town Hall meeting hosted by Congressman Steve Gunderson, here April 5.

Rep. Gunderson noted Wisconsin lost 7,000 dairy farmers over the past five years, or a decline of 19 percent. While that is a significant number, the attrition rate is similar to — or even less than — other periods.

Between 1964 and 1969, there was a 29 percent decline in the total number of dairy farmers in the state. From 1959 and 1964, there was a 17 percent reduction in the number of dairy farmers, Rep. Gunderson said.

"The attrition rate is not unique. The problem that we face in the dairy industry is that young people are not coming in. We've in essence passed one generation by and — unless we make some changes — we are about to pass a second generation," he said.

Even with a reduction in the number of dairy farmers, Wisconsin still has more than twice as many dairy producers as any other state, said Michelle Weighart, University of Wisconsin-River Falls dairy science professor.

"We haven't see the percent decline that other regions of the country have. We still have a lot of farms, which makes bringing new farmers on board even more critical because of the overwhelming number of farms in the state," she said.

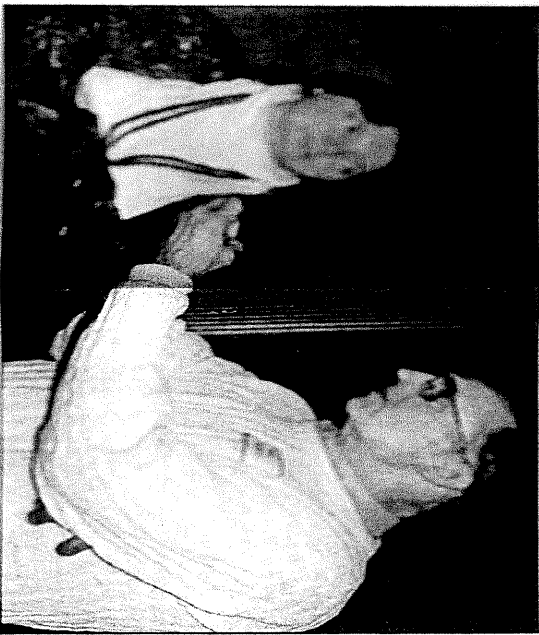
Dairying has a significant impact of the state's economy, generating about \$10 billion in cash receipts annually. The dairy industry employs about 350,000 people or about 12 percent of the state's job force, Ms. Weighart said.

In addition, dairy farmers support a wide variety of other age-related businesses, including cheese plants, milk equipment suppliers and veterinarians.

Other small town businesses, such as grocery stores and autodealerships, are also dependent on a healthy farm economy, Ms. Weighart said.

Referring to the economic hardships Iowa experienced in the 1980s, Ms. Weighart said one out of every four small towns died when area farmers sold out or were forced out of business.

"Iowa is just starting to



Discussing options

Michelle Weighart, left, a UW-River Falls dairy science professor, discusses options with dairy farmer James Servais for halting the decline in dairy farm numbers at a town hall meeting hosted by Rep. Steve Gunderson.

recovered from what happened in the early 1980s. Iowa was basically covered with ghost towns. When the farmers left, the towns died," she said.

In Wisconsin, there has been a downward shift in the ratio of people entering farming compared to those leaving. From 1978 to 1987, there were 3,400 people entering farming compared to 4,500 leaving.

economy, the state government has some impetus for getting involved in the plight of dairy farmers.

There are some federal programs designed to help beginning farmers, such as the so-called Aggie bonds which provide for low-interest loans to qualified beginning farmers and ranchers.

The FmHA State Partnership Program guarantees loans and helps provide down payments for purchasing farms. So far, five states have sent letters of intent to FmHA to enter the program. Another FmHA program is limited to applicants who have sufficient equipment, but lack operating funds.

In Wisconsin, a coalition of dairy farmers, industry representatives and UW-Madison specialists have been meeting for about a year to examine the problems in transferring farm ownership. The group has proposed some solutions, which have been passed on to the state Dairy 2020 Council.

The Farmer's Assistance Program at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture has developed a computerized database program designed to help match farmers wanting to retire with young people hoping to buy a farm.

One problem retiring farmers are facing is the decline in farm

equity. A dairy farm set up for 40 cows is often too small to provide an adequate income for a beginning farmer and the retiring farmer isn't able to generate sufficient income from the farm sale to retire.

Rotational grazing is one alternative for smaller dairy farms, Ms. Weighart said. Another option is to renovate farm buildings, such as turning an old stanchion barn into a cur-tain sidewall facility.

Ms. Weighart has added a unit on farm estate planning to the advanced dairy production course she teaches at UW-River Falls. The curriculum was added as a result of having several students leave their family's farming operation a year or two after graduating.

"My students were going home after college and some of them were backout on the job market in a year. They went into the first part of the (farm) transfer stage but failed the testing stage because both sides failed to discuss their expectations," she said.

When transferring farm ownership or developing a farm estate plan, Ms. Weighart advises working with a person knowledgeable on the subject. There are many options, each having different financial implications.

—Larry Erickson

The dairy industry needs to begin preparing for a method to chart its own destiny, says Congressman Steve Gunderson, R-Osseo. Speaking to dairy farmers and others attending a town hall meeting here April 5, Rep. Gunderson said it is likely the federal government will continue to reduce its involvement in regulating milk prices.

"The name of the game in Washington on dairy legislation is self-help. I think it's a concept that continues to have a lot of merit. I think it is a perfect transition from where we've been to where we would like to go," the House Agriculture Committee member said.

Although citing some areas he would like to see changed in the dairy self-help proposal drafted by the National Milk Producers Federation, Rep. Gunderson supports the concept in general.

Peter Vitaliano, National Milk Producers Federation director of policy analysis, outlined the pro-

**To keep the industry viable, we have to acknowledge other areas are producing milk cheaper and meet that challenge. We have the capability."**

— Gary Anderson, Shawano dairy farmer

visions of the proposed dairy self-help program. The NMPF proposal calls for the creation of a national dairy stabilization board made up of dairy farmers and milk processors from across the country.

This board would have the authority to intervene in dairy markets when total U.S. milk supplies surpass 5 billion pounds. At levels below 5 billion pounds, dairy markets are fairly tight. But when milk supplies surpass that level, market prices tend to fluctuate widely, Mr. Vitaliano said.

As currently proposed, the dairy stabilization board would step in to dispose of excess dairy products through exports and other means when the milk surplus is between 5 billion and 7 billion pounds. Funding would be

raised from dairy farmers, using a Class 4 reduction up to 10 cents per hundredweight.

"It's that 2 billion pounds of surplus between 5 billion and 7 billion pounds that prices your milk," Mr. Vitaliano told the dairy producers attending the meeting.

If milk supplies went over 7 billion pounds, the stabilization board could charge all dairy producers an across-the-board assessment to cover the cost of disposing of that excess production, Mr. Vitaliano said.

The assessment would become a "penalty assessment" or an extra assessment for producers going above their base production for the previous year. This special assessment would be used if milk prices were substantially depressed, falling to within 50

Federal dairy policy seems to be moving in the direction of some type of self-help program, Mr. Vitaliano said. The dairy industry has to recognize change is coming and try to develop a program that will meet these challenges before debate on the 1995 Farm Bill begins, he said.

Following Mr. Vitaliano's presentation, a panel of dairy farmers and industry representatives expressed their views on future federal dairy policy.

Gary Anderson, who operates a 45-cow dairy farm near Cecil in Shawano County, questions the need for the so-called dairy self-help program or any federal dairy legislation.

Mr. Anderson, who represents the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation on the America Farm Bureau Federation's dairy advisory committee, said Midwest dairy farmers have been the losers when it comes to federal dairy policy.

Please turn to Page A2

4-13-94 Country Today

## ASSEMBLY

# Republicans seek rural initiatives

By **RICHARD MIAL**  
Of the Tribune staff

Assembly Republicans are pushing a legislative program to help rural Wisconsin.

Rep. John Ainsworth, R-Shawano, held a news conference at the La Crosse City Hall on Wednesday and outlined several proposed rural initiatives. Among them:

- The creation of separate committees for agriculture and rural development, rather than combining them in one.
- A promise to appoint a farmer as chairman of the agriculture committee.

- Full implementation of the property tax reduction passed by the Legislature last spring.

- Taxing farm land by its value for its actual worth — rather than its potential value.

- Creation of a property rights impact office in the Department of Agriculture to advise the Legislature on the effect of environmental laws on property owners.

Some of those proposals require the Republicans to control the Assembly, which they have not done since 1970. But with the margin of Democrats to Republicans at 52-47, the Republicans need only win a few key races to gain control. Ainsworth was joined at the news conference by Mike

Huebsch, a Republican who is running against incumbent Democrat Virgil Roberts of Holmen.

Huebsch said the 94th District, which Roberts represents, is among the most diverse in the state. It covers city

neighborhoods on the North Side of La Crosse, suburban Onalaska and Holmen, besides rural areas.

While Ainsworth said the rural initiatives were intended to be positive and non-controversial, there are some within the 24-page initiative that will flatly amount to fights between competing interests.

Consider the environment vs. property rights issue. Huebsch contended that too often environmental legislation is drafted in Madison or Milwaukee at the expense of farmers.

But he also acknowledged that groundwater and drinking water problems are real.

Joseph Britt, a staff member for the Assembly Republican Caucus, said the federal government dominates many of the issues in the GOP initiative — including environmental issues.

The proposals being made by Assembly Republicans include things that Republicans can do if they gain control, initiatives that could only be passed through legislation, and things that the state can encourage the federal government to do.

Continued from Page A1

"From a selfish Midwest point of view, I think the government programs have done us more damage than good, particularly over the last 15 years. I think the dairy industry is sophisticated enough that we could handle it in a private sector," he said.

When milk prices were guaranteed at 80 percent of parity in 1977, Mr. Anderson noted that "everybody and their dog started milking cows." Wisconsin farmers already milking cows typically added 10 to 30 cows to their herds.

While dairy producers in Wisconsin and the traditional dairy states made high investments per cow, the California producers started building their herds using low-cost production systems.

"To keep the industry viable, we have to acknowledge other areas are producing milk cheaper and meet that challenge. We have

the capability," Mr. Anderson said.

Gary Gran, a Jackson County dairy farmer with an 82-cow herd near Hixton, said the failure of the federal government to reform the federal milk marketing order system is hampering Midwest dairy producers.

Mr. Gran, a member of the Farmers Union Milk Marketing Cooperative board of directors, urged dairy farmers to get involved with their milk cooperatives.

"Farmers have abdicated their responsibilities to the co-ops and the co-ops, in many cases, haven't done a very good job marketing our product," he said.

Jim Tillison, executive director of the Alliance of Western Dairy Producers, suggested the dairy industry take a more market-oriented approach to solving the problem of surplus milk supplies driving prices.

Mr. Tillison also suggested a wider adoption of component

# Policies hurting Midwest producers

pricing for milk. "Non-fat dry milk is worth more in cheese than as powder. We need to start recovering for our components," he said.

Tip Tipton, president of the International Dairy Foods Association, said the dairy industry will undergo enormous change in the next five to 10 years.

"It will force us to become more market oriented or we will be a constricted type of industry," he said. "The dairy industry needs to do some hard planning and run itself as a business. We need to step back and look at our mission objectives and develop a plan."

Mr. Tipton predicts dairy farmers and processors will begin forming joint ventures and other new alliances. "We need all segments of the industry to be in a profitable position. We need to look out for each other," he said.

—Lorry Erickson



# Gronemus responds to GOP rural agenda

JAN SHEPEL

MADISON

The chair of the Assembly's agriculture committee responded angrily this week to what she said was a personal attack on her leadership by a Republican farm legislator.

Representative Barbara Gronemus, a Whitehall Democrat, said she was disappointed "at the personal attack towards me by Rep. John Ainsworth, (R-Shawano), as being a 'wannabe farmer'."

Gronemus was responding to a key point in a "Republican Agenda for Rural Wisconsin" which called for installing a farmer as chair of the Agriculture Committee. "It is time we had as agriculture committee chair someone who has had first-hand experience with farmers' problems before coming to Madison," the report's summary says. "A Republican chair of the Agriculture Committee will lead the way in ensuring that the Assembly looks at farm issues from a farmer's perspective."

"We don't need to depend on a farm 'wannabe' to head our agriculture committee. That's happened for too long," Ainsworth had commented. He and Rep. Al Ott, R-Forest Junction, spent months surveying farm groups and other individuals, compiling resolutions from various organizations and then debating those issues in the GOP caucus to come up with the rural agenda.

"The majority of my childhood and adult life was spent daily working on a family farm and later farming with my husband," Gronemus said. "Since my farming days I have maintained a continued daily, weekly and monthly constant relationship with farmers and agricultural interest groups."

"It is with pride that I have accepted commendations on my Assembly agricultural chairmanship from national agricultural and legislative organizations, from Governor Thompson, members of the Assembly and state Senate of both political parties, and the Wisconsin Farm Bureau, Wisconsin Farmers Union and Wisconsin NFO," she continued.

Gronemus said she is honored by constituents who have called her "the best hired man they could send to Madison" to represent their rural needs and concerns.

"Without reservation I feel I have represented well the farmers perspective as chairman of the Assembly's various committees on agriculture, and any statement to the contrary I view as a personal and legislative insult of the highest degree," she said.

The GOP's rural agenda as reported last week in the "Wisconsin State Farmer," and released to the public this week in a series of press conferences, contains additional key initiatives party leaders would carry out if they achieve a majority. Those include the following.

- Create separate committees for agriculture and rural development. While the areas are closely related in some ways, they are different in others, the report said. "Development programs impacting small towns are more efficiently considered separately from programs aimed at enhancing farm profitability," it says.



REP. BARBARA GRONEMUS (D-Whitehall)

The GOP legislators pledged to take those two steps at the beginning of the legislative session if their party wins a majority in the elections.

Assembly Republicans also said they plan to fight for the following items:

- Full implementation of the property tax cut mandated by the Legislature last spring.
- 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.
- Zero-base budgeting for state government along with maintaining the revenue caps and spending restraints on local governments enacted by the Legislature.
- 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 better local roads and more health care professionals in underserved areas.
- Establishment of a Property Rights Impact Office in the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

"We regard this document as the opening lines in a dialogue with the people of rural Wisconsin," the report says. "No pledge or promise we can make is more important than this one - with Republicans as the majority party in the Assembly, rural interests will be considered and rural voices heard more than at any time in recent history."

As to the substance of the GOP plan for agriculture and rural development, Gronemus said she has an established record of initiating or supporting the seven items highlighted by the position paper, both as a member of the Assembly and as a committee chair.

"I have always maintained the position that agriculture and agricultural issues should not be of a partisan nature and it is regretful that Representative Ainsworth in his personal remark chose to be otherwise," she said.

# Republicans Eye State Capitol; Offer Rural Agenda

The Assembly Republicans believe they stand a good chance of becoming the majority party in November, following the 24 years of minority status. They also believe that a Republican majority would mean good things for farmers.

"We've been in the minority a long time," Representative Al Ott (R-Forest Junction) points out, which means the other party has had the right to name committees, appoint committee chairs decide on committee members.

Rep. David Prosser (R-Appleton), currently minority leader, said to gain a majority in the assembly Republicans have to have a net gain of three. Currently there are 52 Democrats and 47 Republicans. A net gain of three, would give Republicans 50 and Democrats 49 seats. "I'm very confident we'll retain all incumbents and win all open seats in the assembly," Rep. Prosser added.

The Republican Assembly Caucus decided to put together what they call "A Republican Agenda for Rural Wisconsin." Should the Assembly majority shift in the November 8 general election, Republicans say they want to be ready for the new challenges. They also want to be sure rural needs are near the top of the Assembly priority list.

Led by Ott and Rep. John Ainsworth (R-Shawano), the Republican Assembly Caucus asked 54 ag organizations in the state how the state could better serve farmers' needs.

They also sought information from community development resource agents, main street program managers, rural economic development grant recipients, Wisconsin Economic Development Association members and Wisconsin Hospital Association members.

Receiving replies from 20% of the organizations and individuals surveyed, the Assembly Republicans met during the summer to exchange ideas and discuss rural issues identified in the responses. The result is a rural agenda they say is ready and waiting for the 1995-95 legislative session.

erty tax rolls, the Republican representatives are pledging to preserve ag's sales tax exemptions for machinery, equipment and other production inputs such as fuel, feed and fertilizer.

The report acknowledges relieving the excessive tax burden borne by agriculture through "effective and lasting property tax relief is the single most important step the legislature can take to bolster the rural economy of the state."

- Use-value assessment, taxing farmland at its value for agricultural use rather than its highest and best use value, which often is translated into meaning development value.

- Zero-base budgeting for the state government, while maintaining revenue caps and spending restraints on local governments as enacted by the legislature.

Zero-base budgeting means each state agency would be required to justify each of its programs, not just the changes it proposes to make in those programs.

- Expansion of successful state rural economic development programs, including Community-Based Economic Development and Rural Economic Development grants. An important rural development step would be construction of an ethanol production plant in Wisconsin.

- More state help for such rural needs as better local roads and highways and more health care professionals, especially in underserved (usually rural) areas of the state.

- Establishment of a Property Rights Impact Office in the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) to advise the legislature on the effect environmental legislation may have on the exercise of private property rights.

The report points out However Assembly Republicans say they refuse to "cry doom and disaster at a time when most of the state, including the rural areas, is doing well. We recognize policy mistakes made in Washington cannot be corrected in Madison."



**Capitol Update**  
A Look at  
Legislation  
Affecting Farmers  
and Rural Wisconsin  
By Joan Sanstadt  
Field Editor

**At federal level**  
Three critical policy areas where Congress has the overriding authority are dairy pricing, environment and health care, the Republican report states.

The Assembly Republicans promise their first action as the majority party would be to create separate committees for agriculture and rural development. Although the two are closely related, they also have some marked differences. By having a rural development committee consider development issues and programs for small towns, the ag committee could focus on enhancing farm profitability.

Prosser suggested Ott as a likely chair of the ag committee and Ainsworth as likely chair of a rural development committee.

Second on the priority list is installation of a farmer as chair of the ag committee. The report indicates "it's time we had as ag committee chair someone who has had first-hand experience with farmers' problems before coming to Madison."

Other priorities included in the report include:

- Full implementation of the property tax cut mandated by the Legislature last spring. While lawmakers scrutinize revenue sources for ways to come up with the billion dollars slated to come off prop-

erty tax rolls, the Republican representatives are pledging to preserve ag's sales tax exemptions for machinery, equipment and other production inputs such as fuel, feed and fertilizer.

A particularly irksome point to many farmers is that it is easier for farmers causing nonpoint pollution to access cost-share money than it is for farmers who want to make changes before they have a problem and are, perhaps, issued a Notice of Discharge by the Department of Natural Resources.

The report urges Congress, when it finally gets around to dealing with reauthorization of the Clean Water Act, and the Safe Drinking Water Act, to recognize the best way to first address rural water quality problems is through outreach and technical assistance from government agencies. This approach, the report suggests, may help find less costly ways to secure clean water. If outreach and technical assistance fail, it is imper-

- Higher local road aids and completion of two highway projects: The conversion of Highway 29 between Green Bay and I-94; and Route 151 between Columbus and Fond du Lac to four-lane highways. Other road priorities include conversion to a four-lane highway of USH 151 between Dickeyville and Belmont in southwestern Wisconsin. "This is a Corridor 2020 backbone route in a heavily agricultural part of Wisconsin, now remote from four-lane thru highways," the report men-

tioned any reauthorization of these acts include financial assistance for small rural communities, the report says.

The Assembly Republican Caucus wants Congress to look at reform of the health care system as part of its ongoing work. It recommends as a first step, requiring insurance companies to provide portability of health insurance and coverage of pre-existing conditions. Inadequate Medicare reimbursement to rural hospitals is another serious problem Congress needs to address. Farmers and other small business also need to be assured of the deductibility (from income taxes) for their health insurance premiums.

Dairy policy and this means reform of the Federal Milk Marketing Order system is something only Congress can do. The Assembly Republican Caucus questions whether federal milk marketing orders have not outlived their usefulness. "At a minimum," the caucus report says, "Congress should establish one uniform minimum fluid milk price in all areas covered by federal orders."

State government can not solve all the problems in rural Wisconsin.

# Republicans pledge commitment to agriculture

## Madison

"We decided we want to be the legislators who represent the rural issues," said Rep. Al Ott, R-Forest Junction, at a press conference last week.

Calling it "the first step toward establishment of an ongoing commitment to rural Wisconsin," he and Rep. John Ainsworth, R-Shawano, presented their "Assembly Republican Agenda for Rural Wisconsin," a paper that spells out the goals the two lawmakers hope to accomplish during the next session.

The agenda addresses the needs of rural Wisconsin residents based on a survey conducted by the two representatives. More than 300 rural organizations including farmers' groups, community development agents and state hospital associations, were asked how the state could better serve the rural community.

The Republican Assembly Caucus reviewed and prioritized the 72 resolutions and survey responses that became the agenda's framework. Caucus members hope to move forward with the agenda issues when the Legislature begins its session in January.

"We felt in our efforts to work for a majority, to convince people we're ready to govern in the state of Wisconsin, that we need to deal with Wisconsin's rural and agricultural issues," said Rep. Ott.

Rep. Ainsworth said, "When we become the majority party, we will first of all create separate

committees for agriculture and rural development. Sometimes they go hand in hand, sometimes they have entirely different agendas and I think either could be handled better if they were handled separately.

"After we've done that, we will install a farmer as the chair of the agriculture committee. We have a number of active farmers in the Legislature. We don't need to depend on a farmer-wannabe to chair our agriculture committee, and I think that has happened for too long."

The agenda includes seven additional issues Assembly Republicans will address:

- \* Full implementation of the property tax cut mandated by the Legislature last spring.

- \* Continued sales tax exemptions for all production inputs including farmers' machinery and equipment.

- \* Taxing farmland at its agricultural use value instead of its highest use value.

- \* Zero-based budgets for the state government and maintain revenue caps and spending restraints on local governments enacted by the Legislature.

- \* Expanding successful state rural economic development programs.

- \* Continued and expanded state help for critical rural infrastructures.

- \* Establishing a property rights impact office in the Department of Agriculture.

Rep. David Prosser Jr., Assembly minority leader and chair of the Assembly campaign committee, also attended the meeting.

"We're not claiming to have all the answers in here. We are claiming to be willing to listen and to act on good ideas from any sources," Rep. Prosser said, adding that he hopes the agenda spurs other suggestions besides those identified.

"The Assembly Republicans

realize they cannot solve all the problems and especially we recognize that policy mistakes made in Washington cannot be corrected in Madison. We regard the document only as the opening dialogue with the people of rural Wisconsin," said Rep. Ott.

The legislators are very optimistic their party will gain the Assembly majority, something the Republicans have not enjoyed in 24 years. If they do, said Rep. Prosser, they will actively consider making some Democrats committee chairs.

"If a Democrat has a good idea, let's pass it at the Republican Assembly," he said.

The representatives do not mean to bash the opposing party. "We commit to do much more and do it much better," said Rep. Ainsworth.

The representatives will share their platform paper at press conferences in rural communities around the state today, Oct. 19.

—Janelle Thomas

# Republican Party is promising front-burner attention for the rural agenda in Wisconsin

by  
RAY MUELLER  
Staff Correspondent

Agriculture and rural issues in Wisconsin will receive quick attention by the Republican Party Assembly Caucus if the party wins a majority (50 seats or more) in the Nov. 8 elections for the lower house of the state legislature. To keep the promise, the party needs a net gain of at least three seats in the election.

The promise is contained in a 24-page report, titled "Agenda for Rural Wisconsin," that was released in mid-October. The report has been endorsed by all of the current Republicans in the assembly, but the party's state senators, who hold a majority in their house, were not involved in the project.

Representatives Al Ott of Forest Junction and John Ainsworth of Shawano led the caucus in creating the rural agenda draft. They held a series of press conferences around the state during the third week of October to review the report.

"Skeptics could accuse us of politics," Ott said of the report. "This is the political season. I could not think of a better time to present it."

"This is not partisan," Ott suggests. "It is a positive, leading agenda. But it's only a first step in our rural commitment." He emphasizes the report does not throw any direct political punches at Wisconsin Democrats.

To help identify rural needs and issues for their agenda, the Republicans sent letters in May of this year asking for comment from 54 agricultural groups in the state, 58 community development resource agents, 21 Main Street program managers, 22 recipients of Rural Economic Develop-

ment program grants, 62 members of the Wisconsin Economic Development Association, and 132 members of the Wisconsin Hospital Association.

After getting 72 replies (from 349 letters sent), the Republican assembly caucus met in July to review summaries of the comments and to draft the rural agenda. Although the report contains several specific suggestions, Ott says the intent was to address the general direction of state policies and actions affecting agriculture and rural communities rather than make lots of specific promises.

"We want a good quality of life and success for all who want to be part of Wisconsin agriculture and rural life," Ott explains. Because of the diversity of agricultural crops and farming practices and philosophies in the state, he hopes the many segments and outlooks will become like "a bubble within a bubble" in which they would co-exist "without fighting."

Merely within dairying, Ott believes there's room in Wisconsin for everyone from those who want to "go high tech and get bigger," to those who "want to slow down, have less intense management, and practice grazing."

Another aspect of the rural agenda is to "show leadership" for "what is wanted out there," Ott says. It is also very important to make sure that "we don't lose more things than what we accomplish" through legislation or executive orders, he cautions. The rural agenda report lists dairying, the environment, and health care as "three crucial policy areas."

"We will not pretend that we can affect dairy policy because that would not be honest," Ott emphasizes. The agenda report states "Wisconsin's dairy industry is fighting for its life" but notes federal policies put in place since 1985 have been a major reason that the state's portion of national milk production has fallen from 18 percent in 1983 to below 15 percent in 1994.

The report says federal dairy programs should be eliminated "if they are not helping Wisconsin dairy farmers." It also suggests federal milk marketing orders have "outlived their usefulness" and calls on Congress to "establish one uniform minimum fluid milk price in all areas covered by federal orders" (which do not apply in California) rather than

"fold its arms and do nothing." State officials can do little more than prod and chide members of the Wisconsin Congressional delegation on the subject, Ott concedes.

Noting that the average age of Wisconsin dairy farmers is over 50 and that the traditional practice of turning one's farm over to children is far less often a viable option today because the parties "don't have nearly enough capital to modernize obsolete facilities," the report makes two suggestions. One is to put more emphasis on the state's Exit/Entry program for dairy farmers. The second is to invite farmers who "have capital" after selling a dairy farm elsewhere "because of rapidly rising land prices" to take up dairy farming in Wisconsin.

To help farmers already in the state, the rural agenda calls for "tax-use value." Ott says the highest use valuations, placed by local assessors with oversight by the state, have become a burden because of (property taxes) in certain areas of the state.

"The sale and resale of properties is the driving force for this," Ott explains. "There is extensive pressure for development. Farmers are left with the choice of selling or having a heavy burden."

Diversity in farm practices and non-traditional rural industries should also be encouraged, the report states. A new greenhouse and nursery products and quality value chain clusters have been the fastest growing segments in Wisconsin agriculture in the 1990s. It also calls for the construction of ethanol production plants in southwest Wisconsin. Ethanol is a clean-burning, renewable motor vehicle fuel made mainly from corn.

The Republican rural agenda pledges "full implementation of the property tax" approved by the legislature in the spring of 1994. Under this plan, property taxes will be reduced by 20 to 25 percent starting with the 1996 payments and nearly \$1 billion now collected as property tax for schools will be found through other income and spending cuts, state officials have promised.

Even if sales taxes are used to raise part of the \$1

billion, the Republican rural agenda calls for "continuing sales tax exemptions for farmers' machinery and equipment as well as other production inputs." Ott preferred not to specify what the "other production inputs" might be, but, the reports lists fuel, feed, and fertilizer among the items not to be taxed, noting that they are comparable to raw materials used in manufacturing. What's crucial, Ott stresses, is "to avoid shifting the tax burden" in a scenario that would have farmers paying sales taxes instead of property taxes.

The rural agenda report also says Wisconsin is lagging behind other states in the development of low-cost alternative sources of energy. It notes ground-source heat pumps could replace a portion of the fuel oil and natural gas used in the state and that such pumps "are especially well-suited to rural areas."

Regarding transportation, the Republican report calls for turning Highway 151 into four lanes both from Fond du Lac to Columbus and in southwest Wisconsin and for making Highway 29 four lanes from Green Bay west to I-94. It also notes that "good, dependable roads"

are the most important single element of the infrastructure to spur "rural economic growth."

Ott places lots of emphasis on the report's statements about property rights, land use policies, and the effects of environmental regulations that stem from federal laws. The Republicans want to set up a property rights impact office in the state's department of agriculture for a two-year trial. They also want the department rather than the Department of Natural Resources to oversee the confined raising of deer in the state.

Rather than having individual situations on property rights turn into scenes of "confrontation and resistance," Ott hopes for a first step of "respecting rights so we have a better atmosphere for this whole debate."

The property rights office would be asked to calculate the effect that environmental regulations come off the hides of farmers when they try to meet them," Ott adds. The reports asks that environmental regulators "be familiar with all the regulations rural Wisconsinites have to comply with" rather than merely being concerned with those they are responsible for enforcing.

Should the Republicans win a majority in the assembly, they guarantee they will set up separate committees for agriculture and for rural development, noting one would work with farmers and other with small towns. They also guarantee they would name "a farmer" who has "first-hand experience" as chair of the agriculture committee.



# Hoping to control 2 houses, GOP devises a rural agenda

By Mike Flaherty  
Legislative reporter

If all goes according to plan, Wisconsin's Republicans say they'll control both the Assembly and the Senate come November.

And if they do, a group of Assembly Republicans from rural areas announced Tuesday they're ready to launch a legislative program designed specifically to breathe new life into rural Wisconsin.

A group of 19 rural Republicans unveiled its "Agenda for Rural Wisconsin," a program of tax cuts, legislative changes and expanded government programs the group said would help preserve rural Wisconsin's economy.

"The Rural Agenda is about more than just agricultural issues," said Rick Skindrud, R-Mount Horeb, a member of the group. "It sets the course for what the Legislature can and should do for all of rural Wisconsin."

Admittedly, most rural development programs and farm policies fall to the federal government's purview, noted Rep. Al Ott, R-Forest Junction. But there are actions the state government can take in cooperation with "local folks" to improve

rural economies.

The list is long. But some items include:

- Splitting the Assembly's agriculture committee into two committees, agriculture and rural development. Problems facing small towns differ so dramatically from farmers' problems that the issues should be considered separately, the "Agenda" says.

- Requiring that the Assembly's agricultural committee chair be a working, or retired, farmer — not a "farmer wannabe," said Rep. John Ainsworth, R-Shawano, taking a poke at Rep. Barbara Gronemus, the Whitehall Democrat who currently chairs the committee.

- Fully implementing the \$1 billion property tax cut passed last year by the Legislature. A typical Wisconsin farmer now pays about double the property taxes (per \$1,000 of assessed value) as farmers in Iowa and Illinois, said Rep. Steve Freese, R-Dodgeville. If the government wants to help farmers, he said, it should lower property taxes.

- Expanding state rural economic development programs that have proven effective such as the Community-Based Economic Development program, the Main Street Program and the be-

ginning farmer program that provides state backing for low-interest commercial loans to beginning farmers.

- Expanding state help to build roads and other "infrastructure" in rural areas. Good roads, Ainsworth said, are essential to the development of rural economies.

The "agenda" is the rural legislators' response to a survey sent in May to nearly 400 farm and civic organizations around the state, about a fifth of which responded.

Democrats said they weren't impressed by the proposal.

"Great, just what we need — another new committee," scoffed Assembly Majority Leader Dave Travis, D-Madison. The "Wisconsin Blue Book" lists 31 standing committees and two special committees in the Assembly alone. "I have yet to find a farmer who says that's the answer to their problems."

Farmers don't want expanded government programs, he said. "What they want is lower property taxes."

The agenda, Ott said, simply puts rural Wisconsin "at the top of our list of priorities — where it should be."

# WISCONSIN STATE FARMER

OCTOBER 14, 1994 SECTION B

## GOP farm agenda would put farmer at helm of Ag committee

### GOP representatives to rollout rural agenda

JAN SHEPPEL

MADISON — State Representatives Al Ott (R-Forest Junction) and John Ainsworth (R-Shawano) plan to head to rural Wisconsin next week to publicize a "Republican Agenda for Rural Wisconsin," a position paper on farm policy they hope will be in use next session in the legislature if their party gains a majority of seats.

The two GOP representatives led efforts in the Republican Assembly Caucus to create this agenda which pinpoints the needs of people in rural Wisconsin. The process involved a query to 54 agricultural organizations about how the state could better serve farmers and rural areas.

Using the responses as a starting point, the caucus spent a day exchanging ideas and building the platform, Ott said.

The two representatives plan a schedule of press conferences to air the new rural agenda beginning with a press conference at the State Capitol, Tuesday, October 18 at 9:30 a.m. in the second floor north hearing room.

The next day the two will split up and head for rural areas where they will talk about their agenda at implement dealers and farms. The schedule for October 19 is as follows:

- 9 a.m. — Al Ott will be at Al Swiderski Implement, Inc., Old Highway 51 North in Mosinee.
- 10 a.m. — John Ainsworth will be at the LaCrosse City Hall, 400 LaCrosse Street in LaCrosse in the fifth floor conference room.
- 12:30 p.m. — Al Ott will be at the Raymond and Debbie Diederich Farm, 521 Fernando Drive, DePue. To find the farm go west from DePue on Highway G which automatically becomes Fernando Drive.
- 2 p.m. — John Ainsworth will be at Morrison Implement, located 2 1/2 miles north of Chippewa Falls on Highway 124.
- 2:30 p.m. — Al Ott will be at Farm Credit Services, 3962 North Richmond, Appleton.
- 4:30 p.m. — John Ainsworth will be at Chief Equipment, 2601 South Washburn in Oshkosh, located at the intersection of Highways 41 and 44.

MADISON

Recognizing that rural Wisconsin must be healthy for the good of the state as a whole, two rural lawmakers have spearheaded an effort to create a rural agenda and a working farm platform for their party.

Representatives Al Ott (R-Forest Junction) and John Ainsworth (R-Shawano) will unveil their rural agenda at a series of press conferences next week — see sidebar. They offered the state's three farm newspapers a chance to visit with them about the platform this week (October 13).

"We hope to convince people that we're ready to govern and to do that we need to address rural and farm issues," Ott said.

"We as rural, farm people feel neglected," Ainsworth said. "We decided we wanted to be the legislators who represent rural issues."

The "Republican Agenda for Rural Wisconsin" began last May when the two representatives, who both sit on the Assembly's Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Affairs committee, asked 54 agricultural organizations how the state could better serve farmers. They also queried community resource agents, main street program managers, Rural Economic Development grant recipients, Wisconsin Economic Development Association members and members of the Wisconsin Horticultural Association to see what they

felt could be done by state government to encourage economic development in rural areas.

There were 72 replies from the 349 organizations and individuals surveyed. The common themes were brought in July to the Republican Assembly Caucus which spent a day discussing and adding to the ideas from the survey.

Ideas that came out of the caucus were given priorities and became the foundation for the Republican Agenda for Rural Wisconsin.

The agenda contains the following key initiatives the party leaders would carry out if they achieve a majority.

- Create separate committees for agriculture and rural development. While the areas are closely related in some ways, they are different in others, the report states. "Development programs impacting small towns are more efficiently considered separately from programs aimed at enhancing farm profitability," it says.
- Install a farmer as chair of the Agriculture Committee. "It is time we had as agriculture committee chair someone who has had first-hand experience with farmers' problems before coming to Madison," the summary says. "A Republican chair of the Agriculture Committee will lead the way in ensuring that the Assembly looks at farm issues from a farmer's perspective."
- "We don't need to depend on a farm 'wamabe' to head our agriculture committees," said Ainsworth. "That's been

opened for too long."

The GOP legislators pledged to take those two steps at the beginning of the legislative session if their party wins a majority in the elections.

The rural agenda states that during the next session of the Legislature, Assembly Republicans plan to fight for the following items:

- Full implementation of the property tax cut mandated by the Legislature last spring.
- 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 value.
- Zero-base budgeting for state government along with maintaining the revenue caps and spending restraints on local governments enacted by the Legislature.
- 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 better local roads and more health care professionals in underserved areas.
- Establishment of a Property Rights Impact Office in the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

"We regard this document as the opening lines in a dialogue with the people of rural Wisconsin," the report says. "We pledge or promise we can make is more important than this one — with Republicans as the majority party in the Assembly, rural interests will be considered and rural voices heard more than at any time in recent history."

Assembly Minority Leader Representative David Prosser, (R-Appleton) said that Ott and Ainsworth leaped at the idea of the rural agenda last year when he proposed it. "This program makes sense," he said. "I'm very proud of these two people."

Prosser said that if the GOP were to win the majority in November he wouldn't be surprised to see one of the men installed as chair of the Agriculture Committee and the other as chair of the Rural Development Committee.

"We have really grappled with the issues. We talked. We argued," Prosser said.

Ott said the quest for the GOP rural agenda began long before the campaign season and was meant to be outside the political battles.

Republicans haven't had a majority in the Assembly for 24 years, and Prosser thinks that this fall there is a chance they might win enough seats to make a majority.

"We have not tried to bash the Democrats here if we say the attention the focus in rural Wisconsin hasn't been there," Prosser said. "We will try to do better. We have a commitment to do better."

# The Green Bay News-Chri

GREEN REP. GREEN  
BOX 8952  
Madison

WI 53706-8952

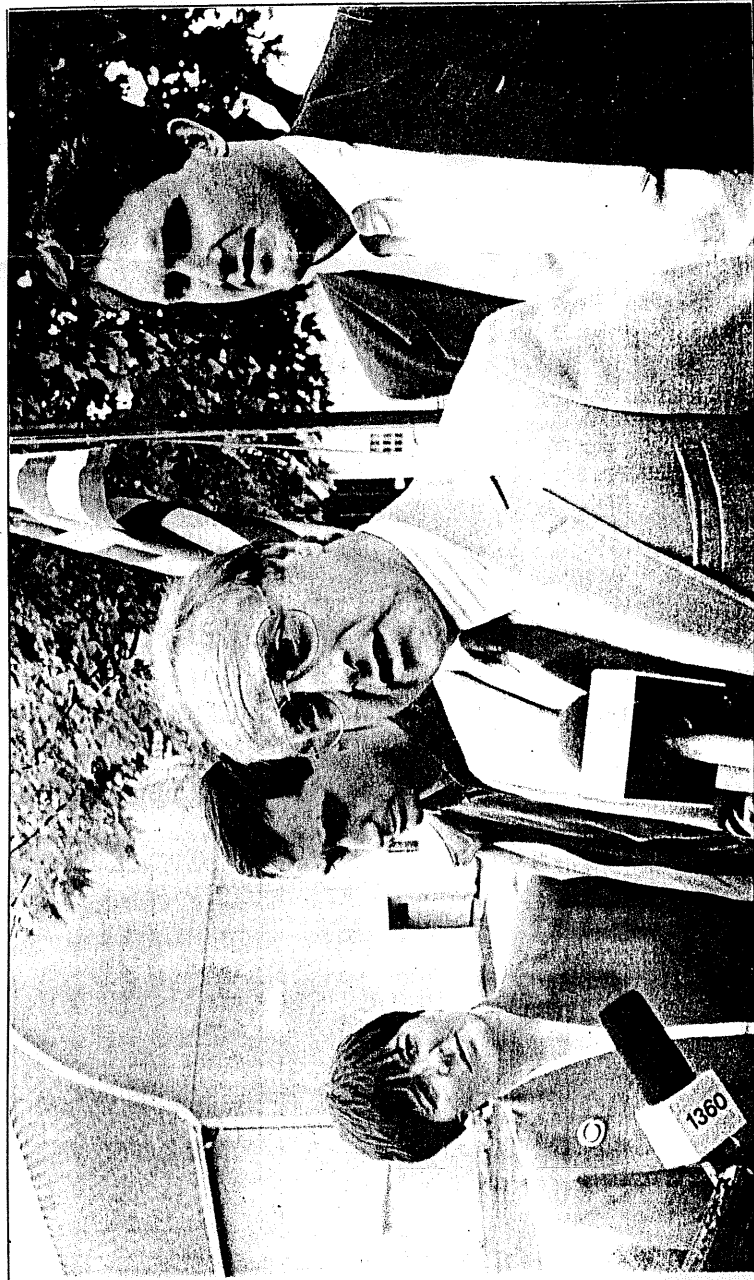
locally owned and operated for and about the people of Northeast Wisconsin

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1994

50 CENTS

## Politics on the farm

Republicans push their rural agenda — Page 3A



N-C photo—H. Marc Larson

Assembly Republican candidates (from left) Judy Klusman, Ric Killian, Al Ott and Frank Lasee promoted their party's farm legislation package at a Town of Hobart farm Wednesday.

### LOCAL/STATE

# GOP: We're not down on farm

■ Assembly Republicans promote an agenda for rural and agricultural Wisconsin

By Brian M. Kehn  
News-Chronic Reporter

The 24-page document addresses issues such as state spending, the environment, business development and land use.

"I would be my anticipation — should (Assembly) Republicans be so fortunate to get the majority, that we go around the state of Wisconsin to further build on this agenda that's been started with a grass-roots approach," Ott said on a Hobart farm.

Of the many positions taken, property tax relief and property rights were highlighted by GOP legislators present Wednesday at the farm.

Implementation of the plan would help revitalize a large portion of the state economically, which has benefited rural areas, Rep. Mark Green of Alliance said.

Use-value assessment — in which property is taxed for how it's being used — is needed to help farmers, Rep. Judith Klusman of Oshkosh said.

The state Department of Development needs to spend some money in rural areas to bring stable jobs there, instead of focusing on urban centers, Klusman said.

As for property rights, Rep. Loren Serrall of Florence said over-

regulation, especially in environmental areas, will cost farmers their homes and discourage rural development in general.

"We need a better tool to see what the regulation cost impact is on the farmer," Ott said.

Water quality and cleanup efforts are shifting to non-point runoff — mostly farmers. The agenda advocates a cooperative approach encouraging cleanup through state grants and programs.

Dictating expensive measures would only put farmers out of business — helping no one, Ott said.

Accusations that Republicans are based on the environment are untrue. The GOP tempers environmental problems with fiscal reality, he said.

Other items in the agenda, developed through questionnaires and meetings with rural and ag officials and organizations:

- A separate committee for rural and agricultural development should be established.
- A farmer should chair the Agricultural Committee.
- The sales tax exemption for farm machinery and equipment should continue.
- The state should adopt zero-based budgeting.

WI State Journal 10-19-94

# Hoping to control 2 houses, GOP devises a rural agenda

By Mike Flaherty

Legislative reporter

If all goes according to plan, Wisconsin's Republicans say they'll control both the Assembly and the Senate come November.

And if they do, a group of Assembly Republicans from rural areas announced Tuesday they're ready to launch a legislative program designed specifically to breathe new life into rural Wisconsin.

A group of 19 rural Republicans unveiled its "Agenda for Rural Wisconsin," a program of tax cuts, legislative changes and expanded government programs the group said would help preserve rural Wisconsin's economy.

"The Rural Agenda is about more than just agricultural issues," said Rick Skindrud, R-Mount Horeb, a member of the group. "It sets the course for what the Legislature can and should do for all of rural Wisconsin."

Admittedly, most rural development programs and farm policies fall to the federal government's purview, noted Rep. Al Ott, R-Forest Junction. But there are actions the state government can take in cooperation with "local folks" to improve

rural economies.

The list is long. But some items include:

■ Splitting the Assembly's agriculture committee into two committees, agriculture and rural development. Problems facing small towns differ so dramatically from farmers' problems that the issues should be considered separately, the "Agenda" says.

■ Requiring that the Assembly's agricultural committee chair be a working, or retired, farmer — not a "farmer wannabe," said Rep. John Ainsworth, R-Shawano, taking a poke at Rep. Barbara Gronemus, the Whitehall Democrat who currently chairs the committee.

■ Fully implementing the \$1 billion property tax cut passed last year by the Legislature. A typical Wisconsin farmer now pays about double the property taxes (per \$1,000 of assessed value) as farmers in Iowa and Illinois, said Rep. Steve Freese, R-Dodgeville. If the government wants to help farmers, he said, it should lower property taxes.

■ Expanding state rural economic development programs that have proven effective such as the Community-Based Economic Development program, the Main Street Program and the be-

ginning farmer program that provides state backing for low-interest commercial loans to beginning farmers.

■ Expanding state help to build roads and other "infrastructure" in rural areas. Good roads, Ainsworth said, are essential to the development of rural economies.

The "agenda" is the rural legislators' response to a survey sent in May to nearly 400 farm and civic organizations around the state, about a fifth of which responded.

Democrats said they weren't impressed by the proposal.

"Great, just what we need — another new committee," scoffed Assembly Majority Leader Dave Travis, D-Madison. The "Wisconsin Blue Book" lists 31 standing committees and two special committees in the Assembly alone. "I have yet to find a farmer who says that's the answer to their problems."

Farmers don't want expanded government programs, he said. "What they want is lower property taxes."

The agenda, Ott said, simply puts rural Wisconsin "at the top of our list of priorities — where it should be."



St. Paul Pioneer Press

10-19-94

10-19-94  
**GOP tax cuts**

Assembly Republicans representing rural areas have unveiled an agenda that calls for implementation of the full \$1 billion cut in property taxes from school operating costs. The agenda also calls for continuation of the sales tax exemptions for farmers' machinery and equipment.

"It is time for state government to move in the right direction of rural issues," said Rep. Rudy Silbaugh, R-Stoughton. Others in the group include Reps. Rick Skindrud of Mount Horeb, Gene Hahn of Cambria, Al Ott of Forest Junction, and John Ainsworth of Shawano.

# GOP vows to look out for rural Wisconsin

■ **Area lawmakers are among those touting an agenda that they say would benefit farmers and other rural property owners**

By Cliff Miller  
Post-Crescent Madison bureau

MADISON — If Republicans gain majority control of the Assembly next month, they are promising a better shake for rural Wisconsin.

Rural Republican lawmakers this week are touring the state, promoting a "rural agenda" that includes lower property taxes and better roads. Joining the traditional list is protection for rural property owners from the financial burdens of environmental protection.

Republicans hope to increase their 47-seat minority to at least 50 out of 99 in the Nov. 8 elections.

State Rep. Eugene Hahn, R-Cambria, said Tuesday that the legal issue of "taking" will be a growing debate topic in the courts and Legislature.

Farmers and other rural landowners will demand state compensation when the value or usefulness of their property is diminished, Hahn said. This may occur, he said, when farmers are ordered to keep the height of crops from blocking visibility at highway intersecons or when government takes private property for bike trails.

The Republicans proposed a property rights' impact office in the state agriculture department to calculate how environmental laws and rules would affect property values. They urged requiring different agencies to know about others' regulations.

State Reps. Alvin Ott, R-Forest Junction, and John Ainsworth, R-Shawano, led the effort to write the agenda.

The agenda includes proposals to:

■ Separate the Assembly Agriculture and Rural Development Committee into two bodies and have a farmer as chairperson of the agriculture committee.

■ Implement the school property tax relief law passed this session to shift \$1 billion or one-third of school property taxes to the state budget. "Property taxes are the single most overriding issue out there in the farm community right now," said Ott.

■ Allow farmland to be taxed at its "use value" rather than assessors' estimates of its value for residential or business development.

■ Continue tax exemptions for farm machinery and equipment, seed, feed and fertilizer.

■ Expand state spending on the rural infrastructure, "emphasizing better roads," Ainsworth said. Rural roads aren't all suitable for today's bigger, heavier trucks to get supplies to farms and products to market, he said.

■ Expand rural economic development programs that are currently successful.

■ Subsidize production of ethanol from corn as a motor fuel supplement.

■ Put state agencies through periodic "zero-based budgeting" exercises to review their worth.

# Farmers' clout could get a boost

Associated Press

The success of Wisconsin Republicans in winning control of both houses of the Legislature boosts the prospects of passing laws protecting farmers' property rights and other agriculture concerns, rural lawmakers say.

Nineteen members of the Assembly are farmers or have farm backgrounds, said Rep. John Ainsworth, a member of the Republican caucus that now enjoys a 52-47 majority.

"We are not out to create a rural caucus — that's been tried — but we want to make sure our fellow legislators from the cities understand us," Ainsworth said.

A group of rural lawmakers started putting together its agenda last spring. They talked to 54 agricultural organizations, more than 50 community development agencies in small towns, hospital groups and individuals.

One agenda issue is the establishment of a

state Property Rights Impact Office in the agriculture department. The office would advise the Legislature about the impact of pending bills on what the rural lawmakers called the "exercise of private property rights."

Ainsworth maintains that environmental legislation often has a negative impact on property values, and that impact needs to be studied while the legislation is under consideration.

An attempt was made in the last legislative session to pass a measure that guaranteed property rights. It would have required government compensation if laws or rules hurt property values.

The measure failed in the Democratic-controlled Legislature. Critics said it was a reaction to environmental laws and zoning restrictions.

Rep. Mary Hubler, D-Rice Lake, said the ag-

riculture department estimated that measure would have cost the state about \$8.6 million a year and required 200 new employees to handle an estimated 50,000 claims.

Another major agenda item is a change in tax laws so that agricultural land would be taxed at its use value, not its possible sale value.

Ainsworth said current law forces farmers off their land in developing areas.

Other priorities of rural legislators include:

- Keeping the sales tax exemption for farm machinery.
- Continued and expanded help from the state for rural roads and health care facilities.
- Expansion of state rural economic development programs.
- A separate Assembly committee on agriculture with a farmer as chairman and a separate committee on rural development.

ue to  
ates.  
nmate  
about  
e Cor-  
Sulli-  
timate  
ise for  
ost in-  
onally

costs)  
illion,"  
going  
nother  
n state  
11 mil-  
orkers  
e next  
ost \$33

er said  
age" to  
public

ical of  
quests  
ns will  
icient,"  
rmined  
deliver  
"

aer.

ake up  
English  
ok, and  
eterich,  
ception  
will be  
the Old  
is free



DAN CURRIER / Sentinel photographer

Uihlein Hall at the Performing Arts Center resonates with the sweet sounds of pianos during the third Monster Concert Sunday. The Milwaukee Area Friends for Piano spon-

sored the concert, which featured 300 students, to raise money for scholarships. The students ranged in age from 6 to 19 and were chosen by their piano teachers.

# Rural lawmakers' hopes lifted

Mil. Sentinel 11/22/94

Madison — AP — Rural Wisconsin lawmakers say they have renewed hope for agriculture concerns now that Republicans control the Legislature.

Nineteen members of the Assembly are farmers or have farm backgrounds, said Rep. John Ainsworth, a member of the Republican caucus. Republicans will hold a 52-47 majority when the new legislators are sworn in in January.

"We are not out to create a rural caucus — that's been tried — but we want to make sure our fellow legislators from the cities understand us," Ainsworth said.

A group of rural lawmakers started putting together its agenda last spring.

They talked to 54 agricultural organizations, more than 50 community development agencies in

small towns, hospital groups and individuals.

One agenda issue is the establishment of a state Property Rights Impact Office in the Agriculture Department.

The office would advise the Legislature about the impact of pending bills on what the rural lawmakers called "exercise of private property rights."

Ainsworth maintains that environmental legislation often has a negative impact on property values, and that impact needs to be studied while the legislation is



Ainsworth

under consideration.

An attempt was made in the last legislative session to pass a measure that guaranteed property rights.

It required government compensation if laws or rules hurt property values.

The measure failed in the Democrat-controlled Legislature. Critics said it was a reaction to environmental laws and zoning restrictions.

Rep. Mary Hubler (D-Rice Lake) said the Agriculture Department estimated that measure would have cost the state about \$8.6 million a year and required 200 new employees to handle an estimated 50,000 claims.

Another major agenda item is a change in tax laws so that agricultural land would be taxed at its use value, not its possible sale value.

Green Bay — AP — University of Wisconsin has reduced the number of credits required for graduation to help more students graduate through in four years.

The graduation has been cut from 12 credits by Chance Perkins, who acted on a recommendation by the Faculty Senate.

UW — Madison Milwaukee have a requirement.

Only one of seven typically graduates in four years. The average student takes 5.5 years to graduate.

At UW — Green Bay the average freshman graduate, spoke Sampson said.

That places the UW — Milwaukee average of 4.6 years below the average of 4.6 years at Madison.

Credits became a year after the university's January interim session, which students spend one course before the semester starts in February.

"When we have an interim, students to take a class and earn credits along the way. Hellwig, a junior on the Student Senate, being cut, there is a question as to whether it will be out in four years or possible for some.

University of Wisconsin-River Falls students who had four credits short now be able to graduate.

The change in university enrollment. Tim Casper, vice president of UWGB Student Government Association.

UWGB has been a success despite freshmen.

A1 - This must be from the press that was sent out when the Rural agenda was presented. Delora said they haven't sent out anything to the press recently. She was going to call Sheryl to let her know we're not still saying the Property Rights office will be in DATCP.

# Many state lawmakers have farm backgrounds

*Fond du Lac Reporter*

By The Associated Press

Rural Wisconsin lawmakers say they have renewed hope for agriculture concerns now that Republicans control the Legislature.

Nineteen members of the Assembly are farmers or have farm backgrounds, said Rep. John Ainsworth, a member of the Republican caucus that now holds a 52-47 majority.

"We are not out to create a rural caucus — that's been tried — but we want to make sure our fellow legislators from the cities understand us," Ainsworth said.

A group of rural lawmakers started putting together its agenda last spring. They talked to 54 agricultural organizations, more than 50 community development agencies in small towns, hospital groups and individuals.

One agenda issue is the establishment of a state Property Rights Impact Office in the Agriculture Department. The office would advise the Legislature about the impact of pending bills on what the rural lawmakers called "exercise of private property rights."

Ainsworth maintains that environmental legislation often has a negative impact on property values, and that impact needs to be studied while the legislation is under consideration.

An attempt was made in the last legislative session to pass a measure that guaranteed property rights. It required government compensation if laws or rules hurt property values.

The measure failed in the Democrat-controlled Legislature. Critics said it was a reaction to environmental laws and zoning restrictions.

Rep. Mary Hubler, D-Rice Lake, said the Agriculture Department estimated that measure would have cost the state about \$8.6 million a year and required 200 new employees to handle an estimated 50,000 claims.



## Rural lawmakers have fresh hope for agricultural issues

MADISON (AP) — The success of Republicans in winning control of both houses of the Legislature boosts the prospects of passing laws on protecting

farmers' property rights and other agriculture concerns, rural lawmakers say.

Nineteen members of the Assembly are farmers or have farm backgrounds, said Rep. John Ainsworth, a member of the Republican caucus that now enjoys a 52-47 majority.

"We are not out to create a rural caucus — that's been tried — but we want to make sure our fellow legislators from the cities understand us," Ainsworth said.

A group of rural lawmakers started putting together its agenda last spring. They talked to 54 agricultural organizations, more than 50 community development agencies in small towns, hospital groups and individuals.

One agenda issue is the establishment of a state Property Rights Impact Office in the agriculture department. The office would advise the Legislature about the impact of pending bills on what the rural lawmakers called "exercise of private property rights."

Ainsworth maintains that environmental legislation often has a negative impact on property values, and that impact needs to be studied while the legislation is under consideration.

An attempt was made in the last legislative session to pass a measure that guaranteed property rights. It required government compensation if laws or rules hurt property values.

The measure failed in the Democrat-controlled Legislature. Critics said it was a reaction to environmental laws and zoning restrictions.

Rep. Mary Hubler, D-Rice Lake, said the agriculture department estimated that measure would have cost the state about \$8.6 million a year and required 200 new employees to handle an estimated 50,000 claims.

Another major agenda item is a change in tax laws so that agricultural land would be taxed at its use value, not its possible sale value.

Ainsworth said current law forces farmers off their land in developing areas.

Other priorities of rural legislators include:

- Keeping the sales tax exemption for farm machinery.
- Continued and expanded help from the state for rural roads and health care facilities.
- Expansions of state rural economic development programs.
- A separate Assembly committee on agriculture with a farmer as chairman and a separate committee on rural development.

Appleton Post Crescent 11.26.94

# Ott predicts good days for farmers

■ Tax, environmental and right-to-farm issues inspire rural Republicans in the state Legislature

By Cliff Miller  
Post-Crescent Madison bureau

MADISON — Farmers and other rural and agricultural interests gained strength when voters put Republicans in control of both houses of the Legislature, a leading rural lawmaker says.

State Rep. Alvin Ott, R-Forest Junction, a strong contender to chair an Assembly committee on rural issues, said the outlook is good for key elements in a Republican "rural agenda" to be adopted in the next session.

Ott was a leader in writing the agenda earlier this year. He expects items to turn up as bills that will be introduced early in the session beginning in January.

"There is a commitment from leadership to give agricultural and rural issues strong attention and to deal with them in aggressive fashion," said Ott.

Republicans have chosen state Rep. David Prosser, R-Appleton, as speaker for next session and state Rep. Judith Klusman, R-Larsen, a dairy farmer, to be assistant floor leader.

Republicans moved from a 52-47 minority to a thin 51-48 majority in the Assembly in the elections, giving them power to chair Assembly committees and decide what legislation gets considered. Senate Republicans held the 17-16 majority they gained in 1993.

One item on the rural agenda is to create separate committees on agriculture and rural affairs. Ott is mentioned as a leading prospect to chair one of the committees and he said he is interested in the job.

"If I'm asked to chair the agriculture committee, there's probably a good chance that I would say yes to that invitation," he said.



**REP. ALVIN OTT:** "If I'm asked to chair the agriculture committee there's probably a good chance that I would say yes..."

Ott represents a rural-urban district stretching from southeast Appleton to the outskirts of Fond du Lac. He was re-elected to a fifth term, giving him seniority over a number of other rural Republicans.

Other items on the rural agenda Ott sees getting attention include:

■ A Senate-passed bill that died in the Assembly requiring farmland to be assessed for property tax purposes according to its value in agricultural production rather than its potential value for real estate development.

■ A proposal to create an "agricultural impact" office to analyze bills and regulations that limit or prohibit use of rural land for farming. Environmental measures often are cited by farmers as diminishing the value of their land and their ability to farm. If farmers are prohibited from using land for environmental reasons, they argue they should be compensated just as if the land had been taken for road-building or other public use.

■ "Right-to-farm" legislation patterned after a trend in other states to assure farmers of the right

# Rural GOP lawmakers want to be heard

From B-1

to continue farming if competing land uses spread nearer to their property. Ott said this is a difficult issue that requires study.

"It is an area of trying to bridge the conflicts between society's needs or wants and the needs and rights of someone to operate an agricultural business," he said.

Also on the Republican agenda are measures to keep the sales tax exemption on farm machinery, con-

tinued and expand help for rural highway and health care systems and step up rural economic development efforts.

Among Fox Valley lawmakers who helped write the agenda was state Rep. John Ainsworth, R-Shawano.

He said 19 Republicans began working on the agenda last spring, talking to 54 agricultural organizations, more than 50 small-town community development agencies, hospital officials and other individuals, concluding with a day-long caucus that all Assembly Republi-

cans were invited to attend.

"We are not out to create a rural caucus — that's been tried — but we want to make sure our fellow legislators from the cities understand us," said Ainsworth.

Ott said rural and urban lawmakers must agree for any measure to

be adopted. He estimated that about one-fourth of the 99 Assembly members represent rural areas.

"Urban legislators are part of this discussion," he said. "I don't think that there is any intent to be forcing any legislation that isn't good for the state as a whole."