

1997-98 SESSION
COMMITTEE HEARING
RECORDS

Committee Name:

Senate Committee on
Agriculture and
Environmental
Resources
(SC-AER)

Sample:

- Record of Comm. Proceedings
- 97hrAC-EdR_RCP_pt01a
- 97hrAC-EdR_RCP_pt01b
- 97hrAC-EdR_RCP_pt02

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- Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP
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By Janelle Thomas

Regional Editor

MIDDLETON — Things are going to be different from the past at Wisconsin's Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

Ben Brancel, the new DATCP secretary, made that promise following nearly a month in his new position. He spoke last week to the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association and the Wisconsin Beef Council.

Mr. Brancel told the WBC on Dec. 4 that the DATCP's divisions will begin to work much more closely and become cognizant of how individual divisions' decisions affect other divisions.

Using a current example, he said the problem with salmonella and the state's poultry industry is being handled in a very different way from in the past.

Instead of department staff going to two of the state's poultry operations in question and immediately subjecting the facilities to investigation, Mr. Brancel called the farm owners into the department, discussed the problem and set parameters for the producers to follow. Reports will be filed and their progress followed. If the procedure works, it will be duplicated in the future and investigations won't be necessary as often as they are now.

It is setting a protocol, he said, so when the Department of Health calls to say there is a problem, the DATCP has a set protocol ready to put into place to correct the problem, Mr. Brancel said.

to the past, the Food Safety

product marketing, he said. This change will be a step toward developing a team work ethic at the department instead of an individual one, he said.

Mr. Brancel told the WBC he wants a person or business in place to aid producers who want to build large livestock enterprises in the state.

"We need somebody who knows public relations to advise these individuals," he said. "The PR side is a separate bag of tricks."

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— State Ag Secretary Ben Brancel, on the need for aid to expanding livestock operations

Today people tend to associate large facilities with pollution, he said. A public relations person would advise producers on how to best combat poor public perception.

The state needs to accommo-

date large operations in order to maintain production levels, he said. Without production, the state will lose processors and the manufacturing of value-added products, he said.

Mr. Brancel also told WBC members that an audit of the Consumer Protection Division completed last week had mixed results. The DATCP assumed consumer protection responsibilities from the Department of Justice several years ago, and that move is still a "blister under saddle," Mr. Brancel said. The agriculture secretary said it's "pretty hard to sit at a peace table when bombs are falling around you."

As the Consumer Protection Division expands, it is going through some growing pains, Mr. Brancel said, just as any farm operation incurs as it grows. The problems are being identified and solved, he said. On the positive side, surveys showed consumer satisfaction with the division is as



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November 13, 1997

Senator Alice Clausing
Chair, Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environmental Resources
Room 308, Hamilton Senate Office Building
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Senator and Madam Chair:

Now that the nomination of former State Representative and Assembly Speaker Ben Brancel as Secretary of the Department Of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection has been formally submitted to the State Senate and referred to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, I wish to submit this personal endorsement of said nomination.

The selection by the Governor of Ben Brancel to be the Secretary DATCP is one of true excellence. In the presence of Ben Brancel, Wisconsin Agriculture and DATCP, have been provided an individual who possesses a hands-on knowledge of agriculture and its problems, the academic credentials necessary to objectively ascertain a needed course of action, the administrative fortitude needed to resolve problems and differences, and a unique perception of issues confronting agriculture and the department. And, needless-to-say, he has the positive ability to be a department head who can work effectively with the Legislature and legislators. Ben Brancel possesses the knowledge and expertise needed to be an effective leader and voice on behalf of Wisconsin Agriculture and the our state's Agricultural Industry.

I urge your earliest possible commencement of the committee process needed to have Ben Brancel confirmed by the State Senate, and I urge a most favorable committee recommendation of his nomination.

Respectfully submitted.

Sincerely,

BARBARA GRONMUS
State Representative - 91st Assembly District
Former Chairman - Assembly Committee on Agriculture (1987-1995)
Ranking Minority Member - Assembly Committee on Agriculture

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c: Members, Senate Committee on Agriculture
Secretary Ben Brancel
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COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES

Congress of the United States House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

October 9, 1997

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The Honorable Ben Brancel
State Representative
Wisconsin State Assembly
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, Wisconsin 53708

Dear Representative Brancel:

Congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. This appointment is a result of your tireless work as a dairy and beef producer and your distinguished service to the people of Wisconsin as a member of the State Legislature.

Agriculture and agri-business are Wisconsin's largest employers. Their economic impact is felt in our state's rural communities as well as our large cities. Over the past fifteen years, the Wisconsin agriculture industry has lost many producers and a growing number of small manufacturers. While farmers in other regions of the country have suffered farm losses, few have experienced the dramatic structural transition that our state has faced.

During my first months in office, I have spoken with USDA Secretary Dan Glickman and countless other regarding the transition and loss of our agriculture infrastructure. While much conversation has focused on simplifying the complicated and inconsistent federal order system, discussion has also included issues like agriculture credit, agriculture technology and transfer, and emerging processing and marketing strategies to assist the family farm.

As the federal government's role in supporting commodity prices declines and budget commitments become even tighter, the role of the federal, state and private sector in addressing the challenges that face our state increases. While time cannot be reversed, and our landscape may forever be changed, I firmly believe that agriculture can remain prosperous in Wisconsin.

Again, congratulations on your appointment. I look forward to personally meeting with you and discussing the future of the Wisconsin agriculture industry.

Sincerely,



Ron Kind
Member of Congress

RK:bp