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In calls for stability, certainty in the midst of dairy and trade crises, stakeholders urge confirmation of agriculture secretary.

MADISON — Agriculture stakeholders from across Wisconsin, in addition to U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Congressman Ron Kind, today expressed their continued support for Gov. Tony Evers' Dept. of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection secretary nominee, Brad Pfaff, and urged the Wisconsin State Senate to approve Sec. Pfaff's nomination. The statements of support come as Sen. Fitzgerald (R-Juneau) and Senate Republicans have signaled they will vote down Sec. Pfaff's nomination tomorrow, Tues., Nov. 5, 2019, rejecting a gubernatorial cabinet nominee for the first time in modern Wisconsin history.

Trempealeau and Buffalo County Farm Bureau presidents

"Last February was one of, if not, the snowiest months on record. As Wisconsinites, dealing with snow just comes naturally; but beyond the snow, ice began building up and high winds created snow drifts that put incredible stress on barns and sheds. In our area we had a devastatingly large number of barn and building collapses due to ice and heavy snow. The month of February for farmers in western Wisconsin consisted of plowing snow, helping neighbors clear snow and debris to get cattle out of collapsed barns and buildings, and even helping other farmers move cattle from one farm to another or to a farm that wasn't their own just to make sure animals were fed and cared for. This created a lot of mental and financial stress for farmers and was a very emotional time for everyone involved. […]

So this was a time when we felt the need to reach out to Secretary Designee Pfaff, to ask if he would be able to come to Trempealeau and Buffalo County to witness firsthand the hardships some of our local farmers were going through. When he agreed, it was such a sense of relief to tell a few of these farmers that they mattered and that that whole state of Wisconsin was thinking about them! These farmers were in a mental state that we have never seen before. Truly their livelihoods were on the line.

It's easy to understand how stops at these farms would last longer than expected. The office of the Secretary Designee said that Brad would be available to tour farms from 9:30am to noon. We had only visited two of the four farms before our time was running out from when we said we would get Brad back on the road. As a testament to not only who Brad is as a Secretary Designee, but to who Brad is as a person, he insisted on visiting the rest of the farms we had scheduled no matter how long it took to visit. Nearly four hours after we said Brad would be done, we finally got him back on the road.

We followed up with all of the farmers in our counties to ask them what they thought of the meeting. All of them thanked us for bringing Secretary Designee Pfaff to their farm. Even though they still had a mess to clean up, cattle that were on farms miles away from their own, and months of rebuilding; they all agreed that Brad's visit truly helped them make it through the long rebuilding process.

As Wisconsin farmers, and leaders of our county Farm Bureau's, we ask that you vote in favor of confirming Brad Pfaff to be our Wisconsin Secretary of Agriculture. Given the mental and financial hardships a lot of Wisconsin farmers are going through at the current time, we feel it is vital that we keep him in place."

Cooperative Network
"Wisconsin farmers are facing some of the most challenging economic and weather-related conditions they have seen in decades. When Secretary Pfaff was nominated, Cooperative Network joined a group of agriculture groups voicing support for Governor Evers' nomination, and we continue to support his confirmation. […]

As a board member of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, it has been my honor to work closely with Secretary Designate, Brad Pfaff. His

experience, work ethic and dedication to Wisconsin agriculture highly qualifies him to lead this important state agency. I believe it is important to allow Secretary Designate Pfaff and his staff to continue to work toward real solutions and a better future."

Organic Valley

"We find Mr. Pfaff to be approachable and to have a strong understanding of food and farm issues informed by his work at FSA, as an agriculture aide for various offices, and as the son of a southwestern Wisconsin dairy farmer.

We have been dismayed to hear his nomination could be in jeopardy. It gives us pause to consider what other options there really would be for this position and how losing DATCP leadership would leave the agency rudderless for an extended period of time --- an especially worrisome outcome given the challenging agriculture economy where a fully functioning and stable DATCP is needed.

While we are not entirely sure what reservation might surround Mr. Pfaff's nomination we wanted to make sure and provide our perspective as a cooperative businesses based in the state with over 500 farm-members and nearly 700 employees in Wisconsin."

Dairy Business Assn.

"Our dairy farmers are being battered by a perfect storm of challenges, from low milk prices in recent years and extreme weather conditions to shifting regulations and trade disruptions. What we desperately need is certainty and stability, not a political fight. DBA supported Mr. Pfaff's appointment at the outset and we see no reason to change that position now. At this critical moment for Wisconsin's dairy community, the right thing to do is to keep him in place."

Wisconsin Agri-Business Assn.

"In February, WABA was there, signing in and pledging our support to Brad Pfaff at the committee hearing of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions. And now that we approach a scheduled full Senate vote on his confirmation, WABA wants you to know that our support for Brad Pfaff has not wavered in any way whatsoever.

Brad Pfaff's life has been agriculture. In his role as Secretary Designee, every action he has taken and every word he has spoken has been in support of Wisconsin farmers and Wisconsin

agriculture. He has worked tirelessly, and serves with a passion that is visible to everyone and cannot be denied. In his first weeks in his position, Secretary Designee Pfaff met with WABA leadership, wanting to understand our issues and needs, and has diligently worked to address those issues. In recent months, he has spent time at several leading agribusiness companies, learning more about their business, and asking what DATCP can do to help them in these challenging economic times. […]

Brad is a good man, steering the ship to better times for Wisconsin agriculture. The Wisconsin Agri-Business Association supports Brad Pfaff as the Secretary of DATCP. We encourage you to vote in favor of Brad Pfaff as Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection."

Wisconsin Cheese Makers Assn.

"Wisconsin Cheese Maker Association (WCMA) supports the confirmation of Secretary-designee Brad Pfaff to the role of Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

WCMA noted support at the announcement of the Secretary-designee in February 2019, citing Mr. Pfaff's distinguished career in public service, including leadership of Wisconsin Farm Service Agency for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Those solid credentials remain relevant today.

In his tenure, the Secretary-designee has worked with dairy processors to form a new Dairy Rules advisory committee, take up more reasonable dairy labeling requirements, and partner on expanding dairy export programs."

Wisconsin Corn Growers Assn.

"As I'm sure you are aware, Wisconsin's agriculture industry is one of the leading economic drivers of our state, contributing $104.8 billion annually, along with 11.8 percent of the state's employment. Every job in agriculture supports an additional 1.46 jobs elsewhere in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin's farmers – while providing so much to this great state – are struggling. Here at WCGA, we call it the "perfect storm". On a federal level, the future of USMCA remains uncertain and the use of ethanol-blended fuels is still jeopardized by RFS waivers. Our growers

are dealing with increased tariffs, low commodity prices and a combination of surprises from Mother Nature, including a wet Spring and what appears to be an early winter.

Our members need stability and continuity. They need someone to speak on their behalf, to work on their behalf and to put it simply: someone to care. Brad Pfaff is that person."