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Governor Doyle Signs Bills to Create Agriculture Jobs, Promote Healthy School Meals

Also Signs into Law Several Bills to Support Veterans

EDGAR – Governor Jim Doyle today signed into law several bills to create jobs and support investment in the state's agricultural industries at a family farm in Edgar. Governor Doyle signed bills into law to create a food processing tax credit, extend the dairy modernization tax credits through 2012, and create a Farm to School program. At the event, Governor Doyle also signed into law several bills to build on Wisconsin's comprehensive veteran's programs.

"Wisconsin is working hard to help our bedrock industries like agriculture and manufacturing position for future growth," Governor Doyle said. "I thank the Democratic state Legislature for working quickly to extend the dairy modernization tax credit program and enact a food processing tax credit program to help farmers and producers invest in modern agriculture, expand operations and create jobs."

In his State of the State Address in January, Governor Doyle called on the Legislature to extend the expired dairy modernization tax credit to help hard-pressed dairy farmers position their businesses for future growth. He also called for a food processing modernization tax credit to allow companies to invest in new technologies, find savings, expand their operations and create jobs.

Governor Doyle today signed both bills into law:

Assembly Bill 756 extends dairy investment tax credits through 2012 to help hard-pressed dairy farmers invest in their operations. The bill also expands the tax credit to cover up to \$75,000 in modernization costs, up from \$50,000. The tax credits will support Wisconsin's \$59 billion agricultural industry. Since 2003, the dairy and livestock investment tax credits have leveraged over \$500 million in investments to modernize dairy farm facilities and equipment.

Governor Doyle thanked Representatives Vruwink and Smith and Senators Vinehout and Harsdorf for their work on the bill.

Assembly Bill 757 creates a food processing modernization tax credit to create investment opportunities for Wisconsin food processing and distribution businesses. The tax credit builds on modernization investment strategies that have worked in other industries. Governor Doyle exercised his partial veto authority to remove unfair limitations placed on food processors and distributors, before signing the bill into law.

Governor Doyle thanked Representatives Vruwink and Hilgenberg and Senators Lassa and Schultz for their work on the bill.

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Governor Doyle also signed into law **Assembly Bill 746**, the Farm to School bill. The bill will help more Wisconsin schools have easier access to locally grown fruits and vegetables. The Farm to School bill supports school-based initiatives to combat childhood obesity by connecting K-12 schools with healthy locally grown produce.

"The Farm to School Program will promote healthy lifestyles, teach Wisconsin students about our state's rich agricultural heritage and support rural economies across the state – all while fighting the critical health threat of childhood obesity," Governor Doyle said.

Governor Doyle thanked Representatives Vruwink and Jorgensen, and Senators Lassa and Taylor for their work on the bill.

Under Governor Doyle's leadership, Wisconsin has invested and promoted its diverse farm economy. Incentives to help modernize the dairy industry have helped increase milk production to record levels and have strengthened the state's status as the number one producer of cheese in the country. In addition, Wisconsin is second in the nation in the number of organic farms.

At the same time, efforts to strengthen diversity in agriculture have made Wisconsin a leading producer of cranberries, specialty cheeses, organic vegetables and many other products. To enable successful farming for future generations, the state's best farmland is protected under the Working Lands Initiative that Governor Doyle signed into law in 2009.

Additionally, Governor Doyle signed the following bills into law:

Senate Bill 527 makes several improvements to the agricultural producer security program administered by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to provide greater protection to the fund and reduce the cost of compliance with the agriculture producer security law.

Governor Doyle thanked Senators Vinehout and Miller and Representatives Vruwink and Jorgensen for their work on the bill.

Senate Bill 304 closes a loophole in the veterans' tuition reimbursement program by allowing veteran students to enroll in full-time programs without losing eligibility for part-time tuition reimbursement.

Governor Doyle thanked Senators Kreitlow and Harsdorf and Representatives Dexter and Berceau for their work on the bill.

Senate Bill 578 adds a member of the Blinded Veterans Association of Wisconsin to the Council on Veterans Programs.

Governor Doyle thanked Senators Kreitlow and Taylor and Representatives Dexter and Suder for their work on the bill.

Assembly Bill 228 creates preferences in state contracts for certain disabled veteran-owned businesses certified by the Department of Commerce, similar to preferences available to certified minority-owned businesses.

Governor Doyle thanked Representatives Sherman and Turner and Senators Kreitlow and Lehman for their work on the bill.