



Budget Action Toolkit

2021-23 Biennial Budget

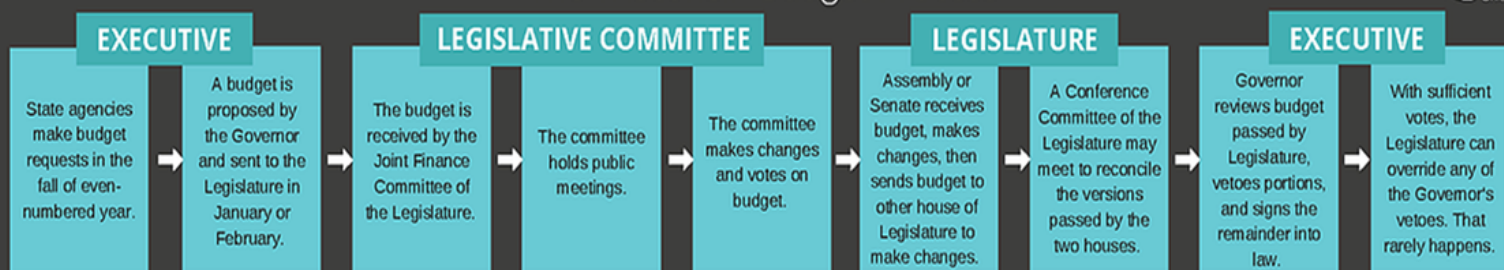
Welcome! Thank you for getting involved with Wisconsin Farmers Union to advocate for key funding priorities in the next state budget. There are so many ways to get involved in the budget process this year - from testifying before the Joint Finance Committee to meeting with your legislators to writing letters to the editor of your local paper. This toolkit will provide you with the information, tools, and resources you need to advocate for programs that benefit family farmers and rural communities.

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Wisconsin State Budget Process

The Wisconsin Budget Process



Source: Wisconsin Budget Project

The process begins during the Fall of even-numbered years when state agencies submit their budget requests to the Governor. The Governor takes those requests into consideration, along with other funding priorities from the public, when drafting a budget proposal. The Governor's budget is announced in January or February of odd-numbered years and is often highlighted during their State of the State address.

The proposed budget is sent to the legislature where bills are automatically introduced by the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) in both the Senate and Assembly. The JFC then begins a public hearing process where they hear input from the public before making amendments and voting on the budget.

Once the budget passes the JFC, it goes to either the Senate or Assembly where it undergoes additional amendments and a full vote before moving to the other house of the legislature for the same procedure. If there are any discrepancies between the versions passed by the Senate and Assembly, a conference committee will convene to reconcile them. The Senate and Assembly must pass the same version of the budget.

After the legislature passes the budget, it goes back to the Governor for their signature. The Governor can veto portions of the budget before signing it into law. The legislature can override the Governor's vetoes with a two-thirds vote of both houses, but that rarely happens.

A new budget must be adopted by July 1st of odd-numbered years, which is the date the previous biennial budget expires. However, if that deadline is missed, previous funding levels are carried over until a new budget is signed into law.

WFU Budget Priorities

CLIMATE AND CONSERVATION

- Fully fund county conservation staffing grants
- Increase producer-led watershed grants
- Statewide groundwater testing and mapping
- Incentives for climate-smart ag practices
- Increased staffing at the Department of Natural Resources for monitoring and oversight of large livestock facilities



MEAT PROCESSING INFRASTRUCTURE

- Grants and loans for new and expanded processing facilities
- Fund additional meat inspector positions
- Education and apprenticeship programs to train new butchers



ANTITRUST ENFORCEMENT

- Fund additional positions at the Consumer Protection and Antitrust division of the Wisconsin Department of Justice

RURAL BROADBAND

- Increase funding for broadband expansion grants
- Target funds toward unserved and underserved areas of the state



HEALTHCARE

- Accept Medicaid expansion funds to expand BadgerCare to 138% of the federal poverty level
- Increase funding for mental health services
- Increase funding to help those struggling with addiction and substance use





How To Get Involved

Testify at the Joint Finance Committee virtual hearing!

The Joint Finance Committee will hold an all-day virtual hearing on Wednesday, April 28th from 10 am to 5 pm. **Registration begins Monday, April 19th at 10 AM.** Space is limited so be prepared to register as soon as it opens!

Additional hearings are being held in-person from 10 AM to 5 PM at the following locations. For the safety of our members and the public, we prefer that you prioritize the virtual option, especially if you have not yet been vaccinated. If you choose to attend an in-person event, please wear a mask and maintain social distancing.

- Friday, April 9, 2021 UW-Whitewater, Whitewater, WI
- Wednesday, April 21, 2021 The Hodag Dome, Rhinelander, WI
- Thursday, April 22, 2021 UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI

Similar to past public hearings, participants will be given a limited amount of time to speak (typically 2-3 minutes). Joint Finance Committee members will listen to all public testimony but will not respond to comments or ask any questions.

Public testimony is a great way to highlight the WFU budget priorities included in this toolkit. Crafting a short personal story around the issue that matters most to you will make your testimony memorable and impactful. The more farmers and rural residents speak up for the things we want and need in the next budget - whether it's conservation, rural broadband, meat processing, or Badgercare expansion - the more we amplify our collective voice. You can use the worksheet on page 7 to craft your testimony. Be sure to check out the resources on page 8 for background information.



How To Get Involved

Submit Written Comments!

The Joint Finance Committee is accepting public comments throughout the month of April. This is another way to share your personal story and highlight WFU's budget priorities. Even if you testify at the hearing, you can still submit your comments in writing to make sure they are part of the public record.

This is also a great way to make your voice heard if you can't testify. While space is limited at the JFC hearings, everyone who lives in Wisconsin can submit written comments. Maximizing the number of comments in favor of our budget priorities has a big impact because it demonstrates widespread support for the issues we care about.

Public comments will only be accepted through the end of April so be sure to submit them as soon as possible!

You can complete the online form available at:

www.legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments/submit-comments/

Or send your comments via email to Budget.Comments@legis.wisconsin.gov

You can use the worksheet on page 7 to craft your written comments. An easy way to maximize your impact is to turn your statement into an op-ed or letter to the editor and send it to your local papers. See page 6 for details!



How To Get Involved

Join us for Budget Action Meetings in May!

During the weeks of May 17th and May 24th we are giving WFU members an opportunity to meet with your legislators to discuss key priorities for the state budget. This is an important way to raise your voice and share how funding for things like healthcare, rural broadband, meat processing, and conservation impacts farmers and rural communities.

The meetings will be held over Zoom and will include small groups of WFU members who live in the same legislative districts. You will only meet directly with your State Senator and Representative.

While the State Budget encompasses a wide range of important topics, each participant will have a chance to talk about the issues they care about most. These meetings are meant to be tailored to your interests and what matters in your community.

If you are interested in participating in two Budget Action Meetings with your legislators in May, please [click here](#) to register or visit:

www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/budget



How To Get Involved

Share your story with the media!

Turning your testimony or written comments into an op-ed or letter to the editor is a simple way to draw public attention to key issues in the state budget. It helps move the needle of public opinion by showing support for a particular budget item and illustrating why it matters to real people.

Op-Ed	Letter to the Editor
Longer - between 400 and 750 words	Shorter - capped at 250 words or less
Often written by organizational or thought leaders	Usually written by a reader responding directly to an article
Important to establish knowledge/expertise	May agree or disagree
Typically only one published per issue	Often more than one published per issue

You can use the worksheet on the following page to organize your thoughts into a concise opinion piece. Feel free to reach out to WFU communications staff for any feedback on your op-ed or LTE. They can also help you identify local media outlets and navigate the process of submitting your writing to a reporter.

Danielle Endvick, Communications Director:

dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

Tommy Enright, Communications and Special Projects Coordinator:

tenright@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

Personal Story Worksheet

Use this outline to craft your public testimony, written comments, or a letter to the editor to send to your local newspaper.

Introduction: Grab the readers' attention and state your opinion.

Supporting reason #1

Supporting reason #2

Supporting reason #3

Closing: Firmly repeat your opinion. Give a clear "ask" or solution.

Helpful Resources

WFU Policy

The 2021 Policy Book is available online at:

www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/policy

You will also find a number of in-depth policy briefs on several of our budget priorities like meat processing, healthcare, and rural broadband.

Governor Evers' Budget

- [Budget in Brief](#)
- [Governor Evers Proposes \\$43 million investment in agriculture](#)

Joint Finance Committee

- [Committee page on the Wisconsin State Legislature website](#)
- [JFC Hearing and Public Comment information](#)

Healthcare Resources

- www.BetterBadgerCare.com
- [Kids Forward Healthcare Budget Summary](#)

Wisconsin Budget Project

The Wisconsin Budget Project provides detailed analyses of tax revenue, public spending, and how Wisconsin's budget compares to other states. Visit

www.wisconsinbudgetproject.org for more information.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to:

Nick Levendofsky, Government Relations Director

nick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

Kirsten VanDerPol, Budget Organizing Intern

intern@wisconsinfarmersunion.com