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August 2007

**Welcome to PDPW's Capitol Link electronic newsletter!**

We're working hard to keep you educated and informed about current issues affecting Wisconsin Agriculture and Agri-Business in a timely and effective way.

Thanks,  
Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin (PDPW)

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## **Vernon Co. Board Defeats Proposal to Create Moratorium on Livestock Operations**

*By Jordan Lamb*

On August 7<sup>th</sup>, the Vernon County Board, voted to defeat a proposal from the Vernon County Health Committee to impose a six-month moratorium on the siting of new or expanding livestock operations in Vernon County. Instead, the County Board voted to approve a livestock facility siting ordinance that they believe conforms with Wisconsin's statewide livestock facility siting standards. The debate was sparked by a building permit application made for a new 2,400-head hog operation in the Vernon County town of Retreat.

The Vernon County Health committee originally proposed the moratorium siting "information" they had received from Vernon County resident, Dr. David Chakoian, indicating that there was a potential health risk to those who live around such operations.

However, the committee also received letters from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, the Wisconsin Counties Association, the Wisconsin Pork Association and other groups indicating that proposing such a moratorium violated the statewide livestock facility siting law.

This is not the first county to attempt to impose regulations that are more stringent than the statewide standards for siting new or expanding livestock operations. Calumet County has also proposed a more stringent regulation with regard to livestock operations, but has yet to take its proposal to the County Board for a vote.

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## Department of Homeland Security Issues Final Immigration Rule

*By Jordan Lamb*

On August 10, 2007, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security issued a final rule establishing a safe harbor for employers who receive Social Security no-match letters. If employers receive a “no-match” letter from the Social Security Administration indicating a social security number mismatch for an employee, employers must (a) verify that the mismatch was not the result of a record-keeping error on the part of the employer within 30 days of receiving the notice; (b) request that the employee confirm the accuracy of their employment records; and (c) ask the employee to resolve the mismatch issues with the Social Security Administration.

If, after the above analysis, the employer can correct the information, the employer should file a new I-9 form using documentation provided by the employee that meets the I-9 identity requirement, include a photograph of the employee and provides other biographical data. According to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement office, “Employers unable to confirm employment through these procedures risk liability for violating the law by knowingly continuing to employ unauthorized persons.”

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office (ICE) has developed an online [Safe Harbor Information Center](#) which will answer no-match related questions for employers who receive a no-match letter. In addition, inquiries may be directed to ICE at 800-421-7105.

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## 2007 Farm Bill Passes U.S. House of Representatives

*By Jordan Lamb*

On July 27, 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a Farm Bill by a vote of 231-191. According to a House Agriculture Committee press release, the House version of the bill (H.R. 2419) does all of the following:

- Invests more than \$1.6 billion in priorities to strengthen and support the fruit and vegetable industry in the United States. A new section for Horticulture and Organic Agriculture includes nutrition, research, pest management and trade promotion programs.
- Implements Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling for fruit, vegetables and meat after years of delay.
- Expands the USDA Snack Program, which helps schools provide healthy snacks to students during after-school activities to all 50 states and continuing the DOD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, which provides a variety of fresh produce to schools.
- Strengthens and enhances the food stamp program by reforming benefit rules to improve coverage of food costs and expand access to the program with additional funding support.
- Includes key provisions that invest in rural communities nationwide, including economic development programs and access to broadband telecommunication services.
- Provides farmers participating in commodity programs with a choice between traditional price protection and new market-oriented revenue coverage payments.
- Strengthens payment limits to ensure that people making more than \$1 million a year (adjusted gross income) can't collect conservation and farm program payments and closing loopholes that allow people to avoid payment limits by receiving money through multiple business units.

- Extends and makes significant new investments in popular conservation programs, including the Conservation Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, Environmental Quality Incentive Program, Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, and many others.
- Makes new investments in renewable energy research, development and production in rural America.
- Rebalances loan rates and target prices among commodities, achieving greater regional equity.
- Establishes a new National Agriculture Research Program Office to coordinate the programs and activities of USDA's research agencies to minimize duplication and maximize coordination at all levels and creates a competitive grants program.
- Protects and sustains our nation's forest resources.

It is expected that an amendment phasing out agricultural subsidies will be offered by Senator Richard Lugar (R-Indiana) to the Senate version of the farm bill when the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee marks up the 2007 farm bill in September. Senator Lugar's proposal would gradually transform the current system of farm subsidies (i.e., counter-cyclical, loan deficiency, income loss and direct payments) into a system that would establish farmer savings accounts and allow for greater conservation and renewable energy spending in lieu of direct payments and subsidies. It appears that the proposal is similar to an amendment that was offered by Representative Ron Kind (D-Wisconsin) and Representative Jeff Flake (R-Arizona) that the House rejected with a vote of 117-309 during the House farm bill deliberations on July 27<sup>th</sup>.

The current farm bill expires on September 30, 2007, but the current farm bill's commodity programs will continue to cover the 2007 crops, even if they are harvested and marketed later this year.

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## State Budget Conference Committee Continues to Meet

*By Jordan Lamb*

The Wisconsin Senate and Assembly passed different versions of a state budget bill in July. Therefore, the legislature has formed a conference committee consisting of leadership from both houses.

The conference committee is co-chaired by Representative Mike Huebsch (R-West Salem), who is Speaker of the State Assembly, and Senator Judy Robson (D-Beloit), who is the Senate Majority Leader. Although leaders on both sides have stated that progress is being made, there is little to report with regard to the agreement upon key agricultural issues at this point in the negotiations. Look for future updates in upcoming issues of *Capitol Link*.

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## Capitol Link Details

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