



Estate Tax, Livestock Care & Standards Board, APR Topics Of Discussion At 2017 Ag Day



MFBF President Ed Davidian addressed 2017 Ag Day attendees.

MARLBOROUGH, MASSACHUSETTS - April 4, 2017 - Massachusetts farmers and students descended on Beacon Hill today to showcase locally-grown food and farm products and to hold meetings with their local legislators about the issues that matter most to them. This annual event, known as Agriculture Day at the State House, is a collaborative effort between the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) and 35 other agricultural organizations.

During the event, MFBF President Ed Davidian, a Northborough farmer, spoke to attendees about the bills that MFBF supports during this legislative session.

"We must put into place regulations that make sense and are workable for generations to come," he said. "This legislative session we are looking forward to assisting our representatives and senators with passing a bill to establish an agricultural estate tax valuation. This is very important for our next generation so they don't have to sell off farmland to pay for the farm they inherited."

To help overcome this challenge, Davidian said MFBF wants to see an agricultural estate tax rate established. This way inherited farmland is not being taxed at the rate for development.

In addition to discussing the estate tax bill, Davidian lead the discussion about passing legislation to form a livestock care and standards board.

"Massachusetts livestock producers want to see science-based regulations," he said. "To do this, an act to promote the care and well-



Governor Baker proclaimed April 4, 2017, as Massachusetts Agriculture Day.

being of livestock has been filed on behalf of animal agriculture. This bill would create a board within MDAR, consisting of farmers, local humane organizations, veterinary organizations and relevant state agencies. This balanced board would be able to come consensus on how to appropriately regulate livestock in the Commonwealth."

Finally, he discussed the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program. According to Davidian, there is a very broad and vaguely worded provision of APR that gives broad authority to prohibit activities which are "detrimental and to agricultural use."



Oysters were served during the legislative preview of the Taste of Massachusetts reception.

"HB 458 would strengthen the APR program by replacing this language with accurate statements that more narrowly define detrimental activities," Davidian said. "This will help keep the APR program workable for future generations to come."

The speaking program was wrapped up with MFBF presented awards to long-time friends of Massachusetts agriculture. Honorees included:

- Representative Sarah Peake
- Speaker Pro Tem Patricia Haddad
- Jonathan "Jay" Healy

In addition, MFBF Executive Director Doug Gillespie award the first-ever Kent Lage Memorial Award posthumously to Kent Lage. Lage's wife Tami Nason received this award in his honor.

After the speaking program, locally-grown food and farm products were distributed to attendees during a Taste of Massachusetts reception. All food was prepared and served by Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School students under the guidance of Chef Margo Wilson.



4-H and FFA students who attended Ag Day gathered for a photo.

For a complete list of the issues MFBF members focused on during their visit to Beacon Hill, please visit:

<http://www.farmbureau.co/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017-Ag-Day-White-Paper-FINAL.pdf>.

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The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation is a non-profit organization representing nearly 6,000 family members across the Commonwealth. MFBF is an advocate for farmers, run by farmer members who develop policies through its grassroots process. Its mission is "to protect the rights, encourage the growth, and be of service to its members, in the best interest of agriculture."

For more information about the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation, please visit www.mfbf.net.

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