



**Special Update**  
**Rotunda Roundup from Montana Farmers Union**  
*Transmittal Update – March 2025*

*The following is a transmittal break update on Montana Farmers Union priority bills of the 2025 Montana Legislative Session. MFU is the state's largest and oldest grassroots family farm advocacy organization representing family farms, ranches, and rural communities for more than 100 years.*

*The Legislature is on Transmittal break from March 8-13*

**Right to Repair legislation update:**

**SB 509- Revise ownership laws related to farm equipment embedded software- electronic control unit, sensor, switches, and controls, sponsored by Sen. Willis Curdy** MFU supported SB 509. The bill would provide farmers, ranchers, and independent mechanics the tools and diagnostic software necessary to repair their own equipment by designating that all embedded software in agricultural equipment is considered sold to the owner, rather than just licensed. **Status: The bill was tabled (killed) in the Senate Ag committee on March 4. Votes to table the bill:** Gillespie, Bruce "Butch" (R-109), Glimm, Carl (R-103), Kassmier, Josh (R-113), Lenz, Dennis (R-125), McKamey, Wendy (R-112), Tezak, Tony (R-135), Yakawich, Mike (R-124) **Votes to support the bill:** Boldman, Ellie (D-147), Curdy, Willis (D-149), Dunwell, Mary Ann (D-142), Neumann, Cora (D-130)

**HB 813- Provide for the agricultural emissions right to repair act, sponsored by Rep. Tom France.** MFU supports HB 813. The bill would provide farmers, ranchers, and independent mechanics the tools and diagnostic software necessary to repair their own equipment and emissions systems. **Status: The bill was tabled (killed) in the House Business and Labor committee on March 4. Votes to table the bill:** Buttrey, Ed (R-21) Fitzpatrick, Steve (R-24) Gist, Steve (R-25) Ler, Brandon (R-33) Maness, Shannon (R-70) Nicol, Nelly (R-53) Oblander, Greg (R-38) Schomer, Curtis (R-48) Seekins-Crowe, Kerri (R-39) Sprunger, Courtenay (R-7) Thiel, Morgan (R-30) **Votes to support the bill:** Carter, Bob (D-96) DeMarois, Scott (D-71) Fitzpatrick, Chip (D-42) Isaly, Jamie (D-58) Karlen, Jonathan (D-98) Lynch, Jennifer (D-73) Seckinger, Joshua (D-62) Sullivan, Katie (D-93)

**HB 390 - MT Ag Right to Repair, sponsored by Rep. Paul Tuss.** The bill would provide Montana farmers, ranchers, and independent mechanics access to the tools and software needed to fully repair their own equipment. The bill was unfortunately tabled in the House Business and Labor Committee with an 8-12 vote.

**Legislators who voted to kill the bill:** Buttrey, Ed (R-21) Fitzpatrick, Steve (R-24) Gist, Steve (R-25) Ler, Brandon (R-33) Maness, Shannon (R-70) Marshall, Ron (R-87) Nicol, Nelly (R-53)



Oblander, Greg (R-38) Schomer, Curtis (R-48) Seekins-Crowe, Kerri (R-39) Sprunger, Courtenay (R-7) Thiel, Morgan (R-30)

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### **Local Food System legislation update:**

**HB 440 - Providing tax incentives to put Montana-produced food first, sponsored by Rep. Jane Weber.** After a successful 2<sup>nd</sup> reading vote on the House Floor of 52-41, the House Appropriations committee tabled the bill on a 13-10 vote.

**Legislators who voted to kill the bill:** Albus, Eric (R-28) Barker, Brad (R-55) Bedey, David (R-86) Falk, Terry (R-10) Fitzpatrick, John (R-76) Gillette, Jane (R-77) Jones, Llew (R-18) Mercer, Bill (R-52) Nave, Fiona (R-56) Nicastro, Anthony (R-50) Schillinger, Jerry (R-34) Vinton, Mike (R-40) Walsh, Ken (R-69)

**Legislators who voted to support the bill:** Caferro, Mary (D-81) Crowe, Thedis (D-15) Fox, Mike (D-32) Hawk, Donavon (D-72) Keogh, Connie (D-92) Matthews, Eric (D-66) Muszkiewicz, Luke (D-79) Powers, Debo (D-3) Rosenzweig, Scott (D-57) Tuss, Paul (D-27)

The goal of this bill was to provide an incentive opportunity for retailers to stock Montana foods on their shelves, providing a subtraction from individual income and corporate income taxes for the income from Montana-Produced food. This is completely voluntary.

**HB 649 – Establish a farm to food bank program, sponsored by Rep. Shelly Fyant.** MFU supported HB 649. The bill sets up a Farm to Food Bank grant program to be run through the Department of Agriculture. This program can help to build a new, local, more reliable market for farmers and ranchers, direct local money into rural communities, help Food Pantry's strengthen their local economic buying power, and enable more Montanans to get fresh, locally grown food. **Status & Next Steps:** The bill passed out of the House Agriculture Committee 11-6 and will be heard on the House Floor soon for Second reading.

**SJ 11 – Interim study on farmer's markets and food systems, sponsored by Sen. Butch Gillespie.** MFU supports SJ 11. This study will look at clarifying the regulatory framework around farmers markets in Montana and provides the opportunity for stakeholders to come to the table and figure out what may or may not be working. There have been a lot of changes around cottage food laws and homemade local foods in the last couple of legislative sessions which has created confusion for both those selling at markets and those working on the food safety and liability. **Status & Next Steps:** The bill unanimously passed the Senate Ag Committee and will have a 2<sup>nd</sup> reading vote in the Senate soon.



**SB 246 - Provide for Montana First Procurement laws and establish reporting**

**requirements, sponsored by Sen. Cora Neumann.** MFU supports SB 246. The bill provides a reporting requirement for contracts for the procurement of food products by a governmental body with a total contract value of \$100,000 or more. SB 246 is a great starting place to gain an understanding of where we are at with using Montana taxpayer dollars for procurement of our large state institutional contracts (think food for the state hospital, Department of Corrections, University systems, etc). **Status & Next Steps:** The bill has passed the full Senate and will have a hearing in the House soon.

**SB 371 - “An Act Providing Tax Incentives for the Sale of Montana-produced Goods; Providing a Subtraction from Individual Income and Corporate Income Taxes for the Income from Montana-Produced goods, sponsored by Sen. Cora Neumann.**

This bill provides an incentive opportunity for retailers to stock Montana-produced goods on their shelves, providing a subtraction from individual income and corporate income taxes for the income from Montana-Produced goods. This is completely voluntary for retailers. More competition in the marketplace is good for consumers and producers. Corporate control and influence hinders competitive opportunity for Montana producers to gain shelf and market access. **Status & Next Steps:** The bill will be heard in the Senate Tax Committee soon.

***Priority bill we are opposing:***

**HB 119 - Establish MT Cattle Committee: second beef check-off in the works.** Sponsored by Rep. Brandon Ler and Senator Butch Gillespie. MFU is opposed to the bill as written. The bill provides for a politically appointed committee that would collect an assessment fee of \$1 from Montana Cattle producers upon a referendum vote. **Status & Next Steps:** The bill was scheduled for a hearing on Thursday, 2/27/25 and was postponed at the last minute.

**We are asking folks to act in two ways:**

Tell the Governor to oppose the bill & send a note to the Senate ag committee asking them to vote no on the bill. Head to [montanafarmersunion.com](http://montanafarmersunion.com) under the Legislation > Rotunda Roundup 2025 tab to use our action alert system to send an email to members of the Senate Ag Committee asking they send the bill back to the drawing board.

**We will continue to track bills that impact family farms and ranches and rural communities and keep you informed. Questions or feedback on a bill? Contact Rachel Prevost at [rprevost@montanafarmersunion.com](mailto:rprevost@montanafarmersunion.com) or Jasmine Krotkov at [jkrotkov@montanafarmersunion.com](mailto:jkrotkov@montanafarmersunion.com) or Erik Somerfeld [riksomer@3rivers.net](mailto:riksomer@3rivers.net)**