

Committee Action Taken On Several Bills

Last week saw increased activity on both the House and Senate floors as the turnaround deadline, which marks the last day for nonexempt bills to be passed out of their chamber of origin, fast approaches. Many committees also focused on finishing work on nonexempt bills. Several are of interest to KLA members.

Raw milk - The Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee amended and favorably passed SB 308, which deals with labeling and advertisement of on-farm sales of raw, unpasteurized milk. The committee opted to amend the bill to remove the portion of the required label and advertisement disclaimers that warned of the risk of foodborne illness. Instead, under the amendment, labels and advertisements would only be required to state the product is raw and unpasteurized milk. KLA supports language on the label that would appropriately warn consumers about the potential danger of unpasteurized milk containing organisms that cause foodborne illness. Staff will work to reinsert the warning requirement for the label as the bill advances through the legislative process. The Senate Agriculture Committee will not take up SB 300, the bill that would completely ban the sale of raw, unpasteurized milk. The bill will be considered dead as of February 24. KLA did not take a position on SB 300.

Property tax abatement - The Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee amended and favorably passed SB 242, a bill that would allow for a property tax abatement on agriculture improvements that were significantly damaged in a state-declared natural disaster. The bill was amended to include grain-handling facilities for elevators and cooperatives. SB 242 was introduced primarily to help those impacted by last year's tornado in Leavenworth County.

Appraisal of agricultural land - The Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee introduced SB 457, a bill regarding the appraisal of agricultural land for property taxes. This bill would require the county appraiser to use the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil classifications from September 16, 2019. Currently, the use-value appraisal system uses NRCS soil types to adjust the income-producing potential of the land for tax purposes. SB 457 essentially would prevent appraisers from updating the soil types for property tax purposes when NRCS updates its soil classification maps.