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## **PROFS is lobbying on Extension bills that could still come up in Legislature**

As the Wisconsin Legislature was rushing to conclude its regular session late last year and early this year, a couple of bills dealing with UW Extension took center stage. Both bills were initially developed by agricultural commodities groups.

**AB 627/SB 563** would provide \$1 million more in funding this biennium for applied agricultural research conducted by Extension faculty and staff.

**AB 556/SB 497** is designed to make sure Extension faculty and staff get proper credit for the work they do through the university's reporting to the Legislature. As amended, it would require the development of policies to monitor extension and outreach efforts by state agricultural specialists at four campuses, including UW-Madison.

The advocacy group PROFS, known as the voice of the UW-Madison faculty, has been very involved in lobbying on the Extension bills. CALS faculty members Steve Ventura (Environmental Studies and Soil Science), a member of the University Committee and PROFS Board of Directors, and Julie Dawson (Horticulture), a member of the PROFS Steering Committee, were very active in PROFS' advocacy, along with PROFS lobbyist Jack O'Meara.

PROFS strongly supports AB 627/SB 563, the bill to provide more funding for Extension. Professor Ventura testified in favor of the bill in committee.

PROFS originally opposed AB 556/SB 497 because it was poorly crafted and could be seen as micromanaging the university. PROFS switched its position to Other, neither for nor against, after it was amended to address many of the group's concerns. Some faculty continue to believe the bill is micromanaging, so PROFS does not support it, but also does not oppose it.

Both bills passed the State Assembly. They were ready to be brought up in the State Senate. The Senate was planning to meet one last time in late March, but the COVID-19 pandemic forced the Senate to cancel that session.

A legislative special session is expected later in the spring. The Extension bills could be taken up at that time. It is also possible the bills could be brought up in a legislative session dealing with COVID-19 that could happen soon.

Given how fluid the political and economic situations are, it is not clear if these two bills still have a chance of passing. Whatever happens, PROFS will continue to advocate for the interests of Extension faculty, as well as all UW-Madison faculty, going forward.

As most of you know, PROFS is the Public Representation Organization of the (UW-Madison) Faculty Senate. PROFS represents the interests of the UW-Madison faculty. PROFS is linked to the shared governance structure at the university. The University Committee, the elected executive committee of the Faculty Senate, serves as the

PROFS Board of Directors.

PROFS has produced many accomplishments for the UW-Madison faculty since the organization was created more than 40 years ago. From successfully advocating for state funding for pay plans to fighting ideological attacks on research to drafting and passing legislation to help faculty who spin off businesses, PROFS always puts a laser focus on advancing the interests of the faculty.

PROFS is particularly pleased that Extension is again fully under the banner of UW-Madison. The work done by Extension is the embodiment of the Wisconsin Idea, the belief that university research and expertise should be applied to solve problems and improve health, quality of life, the environment, and agriculture for all citizens of Wisconsin and beyond.

Regarding COVID-19, those of us at UW-Madison should be proud that members of our faculty and staff are playing major roles in fighting the virus at the state, national, and international levels.

For more information on PROFS, go to [profs.wisc.edu](http://profs.wisc.edu). You can also follow PROFS on Facebook (PROFSUWMadison) and Twitter (@PROFSUWMADISON).