



BRAD PFAFF
STATE SENATOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 10, 2025

Contact: Sen. Pfaff
608.266.5490

Happy National FFA Week

As a farm boy, National FFA Week is special to me. From February 15th to February 22nd, we celebrate FFA programs and the tremendous impact they have on students across Wisconsin and our country.

Growing up, all I knew was farming. My parents were raised on farms. My paternal grandparents farmed across the road; my uncle 4 miles up the road. Lessons of life were taught to me from the perspective of the farm. Every day brought new experiences.

Joining FFA in school was a no-brainer. Classes that focused on soil health, biology, and economics made sense to me, I just had to view it from the perspective of the farm. However, like many high school students, I was curious about the world beyond the farm, while at the same time, I was timid and apprehensive about what opportunities might be available.

As a student at Melrose-Mindoro High School, my FFA instructor, Mr. Jim Brady, saw something in me and provided me with opportunities to learn and explore. I will never forget a trip we took to the Chicago Board of Trade where I saw and heard firsthand from traders in the “pit” who were buying and selling ag commodities that were grown on the farm. Touring dairy processing facilities and the Miller Brewing Company in Milwaukee, I saw how products from the farm are made into everyday consumer products.

I can vividly remember attending the National FFA Convention in Kansas City and being interviewed by a farm broadcaster from Illinois who wanted to know where I was from and what my interests were. It made me contemplate my future and what I wanted to do after graduation.

These experiences in FFA helped me grow and mature as a person. They helped me gain confidence, speak with a purpose, and lead. The lessons in leadership I gained from FFA have helped me ever since, whether it was serving as the Secretary-designee of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection or in my current role as the Ranking Democratic Member on the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Revenue.

Continued support for FFA programs will help develop strong leaders who use their skills to enhance our quality of life. It’s about connecting the dots between people who live in rural agricultural communities, and those who live in cities and suburbs that may not understand the impact of agriculture. FFA programs can bridge the gap between rural and urban, providing opportunities to all students to participate in Wisconsin agriculture, whether you grew up on a farm or not. During a time when many employers are looking for employees with real-world job skills, FFA programs provide hands-on job training.

For those who want to work in production agriculture, we should make sure they have the tools to succeed. Last session, I cosponsored legislation to support beginning farmers through a refundable tax credit that would help the transition of family farms to the next generation by encouraging current farmers to sell or lease farmland and machinery to beginning farmers and help those same farmers with their startup costs. Programs like this

will help usher in a new generation of Wisconsin farmers that can help Wisconsin continue to lead in dairy, vegetable growing, genetics, and food processing.

Strengthening our rural communities takes a holistic approach. We need to ensure access to affordable rural health care. This means supporting rural hospitals and clinics, and recognizing them as an economic driver. We also need to focus on rural housing to support working families. Greater access to housing will reduce commute times and help us grow our workforce here in Wisconsin. For those same families, we need to ensure child care is affordable and accessible. Investing in roads and bridges ensures farm products can get from the farm to the market.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the challenges we face, but FFA is one way to help students grow into the next generation of problem solvers. Thank you to all of the parents, volunteers, advisors, and students who make FFA an enriching environment for learning and fellowship in our state.

For a lot of people, including myself, the FFA blue corduroy jacket may no longer fit, but the lessons and memories last a lifetime.

###

Senator Brad Pfaff represents the 32nd Senate District, which includes La Crosse County, Vernon County, and parts of Monroe and Trempealeau County.