

Blake, Hatfield Named Legislator Of The Year by WSFB

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - At its recent board of directors meeting, Washington Farm Bureau named four legislators as outstanding protectors of agriculture in Washington. Letters of commendation for their service in 2011 were awarded to Senator Jim Honeyford, R-Sunnyside; Senator Brian Hatfield, D-Raymond; Representative Bruce Chandler, R-Granger; and Representative Brian Blake, D-Aberdeen. In addition to receiving the letters of commendation, Sen. Hatfield and Rep. Blake were each also named "Legislator of the Year." Washington Farm Bureau is the state's largest general agricultural association, representing the economic and social interests of more than 41,000 member families. Since 1995, WFB's board of directors awards one or more state legislators with the honor of being the organization's Legislator of the Year. A legislator's vote record and outstanding actions to help strengthen family farms are key criteria for receiving this award.

Sen. Hatfield served as an ardent and early supporter of Unemployment Insurance (UI) reform legislation and real Workers' Compensation reform (SB 5566), issues extremely important to the success of farmers and ranchers in our state. As leader of the "Roadkill Caucus," Sen. Hatfield was responsible for creating an environment that allowed for the creation of a reasonable, bipartisan budget. In addition to also supporting UI & Workers' Comp. reform measures, Rep. Blake exercised sound judgment when discussing complex ag issues both in his committee and his caucus. As Chair of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, Rep. Blake championed funding of the Department of Agriculture and the Conservation Commissions-services critical to the continued success of our state's agricultural businesses. Both legislators of the year demonstrated their understanding of the importance of agriculture to our state's economy by supporting agriculture's requests related to complex water use issues; limiting punitive fertilizer and fuel fees related to agricultural operations; and, protecting English Holly growers. Both Hatfield and Blake also played vital roles in creating the new Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) as an alternative to new regulations of agriculture under the state Growth Management Act. The VSP will allow locally-driven plans to drive stewardship decisions while protecting existing agricultural activities from harmful restrictions. The 19th District lawmakers will be recognized for their efforts on behalf of Washington state farmers and ranchers at the Washington Farm Bureau's 92nd Annual Meeting in November.