

Dangerous legislation on the table



For Starters

By CHERRY BRIESER STOUT

DON'T want to pay a scary new state gross receipts tax next year? Then you'd better contact your legislator and ask him or her to vote "no" to the governor's plan to implement the business tax.

Expected to generate \$7.6 billion a year, the GRT would add up to the largest tax increase ever in Illinois. Under the plan, manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers will pay 0.85% (\$8,500 in taxes for every \$1 million in annual Illinois sales), while service providers will pay 1.95%.

This tax will hurt all Illinois farmers, whether you fall under the \$2 million in sales exemption or not, thanks to the increased cost you'll pay for seed, feed, fertilizer, machinery and other inputs.

Illinois wouldn't be the first state to impose a gross receipts tax on business. Kentucky, Ohio and Washington currently have a GRT. But Illinois' rates are much higher and it would collect far more than other states.

Indiana repealed its GRT tax five years ago, because it discouraged new investments and startups. You can bet that Hoosiers will be ready to take advantage of business opportunities at our expense if we pass the tax.

While Indiana raised \$240 million from the GRT in 2002, our neighbors to the east found that the GRT created a lot of litigation. The GRT looks like a simple tax, but it's actually a very complicated one.

The bottom line is that the GRT is bad for business in Illinois. It could cause some businesses to move out of state, and send the wrong message to new ones.

For sure, Illinois needs to generate more revenue for schools, but this tax is an unfair and onerous one that could devastate the business climate and the economy of the state. So, along with spring planting, you should make it a top priority to call your legislators and speak out against this tax. Make sure your voice is heard.

To contact your legislator, call 877-422-8424 and ask the Illinois State Directory operator to transfer your call to your legislator. To obtain your legislative district, go online to IFB's legislative action center.

Off the horse fence

It's time to get off the fence on the horse-slaughter issue.

For the third consecutive year, the Illinois Legislature is considering a bill (HB 1711) that would permanently shut down a horse-processing plant in DeKalb. Federal lawmakers are dealing with the same issue in the form of HR 503. This is a tough vote for lawmakers, and it's a disturbing issue for many horse owners, including me. I've lived with horses for 40 years, and give my four good horses the best care I can afford.

A popular saying in the horse world

is that it costs as much to keep a good horse as a bad horse. I found that out the hard way. As a teenager, I bought a mare from a woman who told me the animal was "high-strung and needed an experienced rider." I thought I was up for the challenge, until several riding mishaps on a crazed, runaway horse convinced me otherwise.

Headed for college, I finally decided to take the dangerous mare to a horse

auction, knowing she could and probably should be sold for slaughter.

I believe it's a necessary market option for dangerous and other unwanted horses. Without a slaughter market to set a floor for horse prices, you won't be able to sell or even give away these marginal horses.

The issue poses a serious threat to all animal ag. If horse slaughter ends today, it could be cows and pigs tomorrow.

We need to be proactive and counter this attack on animal ag. Contact your state legislators and ask them to oppose HB 1711. Call, e-mail or write your federal legislator and ask them to take a stand for animal agriculture and against the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (HR 503).

■ For more on these hot issues, go to www.prairiefarmer.com.



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