



# WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION

EST. 1891

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NEWS RELEASE

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*Media Note: A high-resolution WCMA logo and images of awardees are available for download at [bit.ly/wcmacheesechampions](http://bit.ly/wcmacheesechampions).*

## WCMA Honors 2024 Cheese Champions

MADISON, WI – As June Dairy Month approaches, the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) presented its third annual Cheese Champion awards to seven federal and state lawmakers for their efforts to support and advance the dairy processing industry.

“Dairy processors have fostered strong, productive partnerships with Wisconsin lawmakers – partnerships that are creating greater stability and boosting business growth,” said WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney. “We’re grateful for the consistent support of this year’s legislative Cheese Champions, and we’re pleased to recognize them for their work.”

Among the awardees applauded at WCMA’s Annual Member Meeting on May 22 was **U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisconsin)**. Baldwin established and continues to champion funding for the Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives, providing technical assistance and grants for dairy farmers and processors. Baldwin is also a lead author of the DAIRY PRIDE Act and CURD Act, which focus on accurate food labeling, and the Safeguarding American Value-Added Exports (SAVE) Act, aimed at protecting American food products from unfair foreign trade practices. Additionally, she has been a strong advocate for rural infrastructure investments, including roads and broadband.

**Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers** was also honored for his dedication to maintaining the state’s leadership in the dairy industry. Gov. Evers was the first to propose a substantial funding increase for the state’s Dairy Processor Grants and the creation of a dairy export initiative. He has championed rural capital access and rural broadband expansion and called for transparency and accuracy in food labeling.

WCMA further commended five state lawmakers for their strong support for the dairy processing industry: **Senator Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan), Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green), Senator Brad Pfaff (D-Onalaska), Representative Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc), and Representative Travis Tranel (R-Cuba City).**

As a member of the Joint Finance Committee, Sen. Ballweg has been instrumental in securing ongoing funding for the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports (WIAE) and the state’s popular Dairy Processor Grant program. She led the successful push in the State Senate to increase liquid dairy hauling capacity on state roads and, as chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Tourism, has shepherded many bills important to WCMA members through the legislative process.



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Sen. Marklein, co-chair of the Joint Finance Committee, continues to champion the Dairy Innovation Hub, directing \$8 million each year to industry research and training across three University of Wisconsin campuses. He has authored legislation to ensure products labeled as milk or cheese are made from real dairy to protect both consumers and the industry. Marklein also led efforts to fund rural broadband expansion and co-authored the Agricultural Road Improvement Program (ARIP), dedicating \$150 million to fix rural roads used by dairy processors and their farmer partners.

A longtime advocate for Wisconsin's dairy industry, Sen. Pfaff has worked to advance many of WCMA members' key state priorities, from broadband investments to transportation to critical funds for dairy business growth. He has supported measures to create the WIAE, boost dairy processor grant funding, support the Dairy Innovation Hub, and expand rural broadband access.

Also a member of the Joint Finance Committee, Rep. Kurtz has played a pivotal role in ensuring that Dairy Processor Grants and the WIAE have necessary funding. This legislative session, he led the charge on a bill – now state law – designed to ensure dairy processors can haul full loads of whey and whey byproducts on state roads to help ease labor strains and reduce fuel consumption.

Rep. Tranel, a dairy farmer and Chair of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture, championed ARIP in the Assembly, helping to bring critical road funding across the finish line. Tranel has also supported WCMA members' efforts to ensure accurate food labeling, expand affordable high-speed internet access, and provide continued funding for industry innovation.

WCMA serves as a strong voice for dairy processors, manufacturers, marketers, and industry suppliers on legislative and regulatory activity at the state and federal levels. More information on the Association's advocacy efforts is available at [WisCheeseMakers.org](http://WisCheeseMakers.org).

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