

Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture  
**KENT A. LEONHARDT**



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**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**WEST VIRGINIA COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE KENT LEONHARDT TOUTS  
SUCCESSFUL SESSION**

**Charleston, W.Va.** – West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt released the following statement after the conclusion of the 2018 Legislative session.

“From an agricultural standpoint, we accomplished a lot in the last sixty days,” Leonhardt said. “Regulations and red tape were reduced, as well as increasing opportunities for West Virginia producers. There is so much more to be done but we have started putting West Virginia agriculture on even footing with the rest of the country.”

Of the several priorities Commissioner Leonhardt set forth in January, the top three were accomplished during this Legislative session. This included clarifying code to allow the department to hire a general counsel, establishing a fund to rebuild the Guthrie laboratories and direct funding towards the West Virginia Department of Agriculture’s Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture Program.

“The Legislature should be proud of not only passing a balanced budget with no tax increases within the sixty-day session but also putting monies towards the Vets to Ag program for the first time since its inception. We now feel West Virginia can continue to be a national leader for veteran issues,” Leonhardt said. “Thank you to all the delegates and senators that supported this cause.”

**Agriculture related legislation passed:**

- HB 4079 – Miscellaneous Rules Bundle (increased the number of rabbits exempted from inspection and placed kudzu and Japanese barberry, within three years, on the noxious weed list)
- HB 4166 - Establishing a special revenue fund to be known as the "Capital Improvements Fund — Department of Agriculture Facilities"
- SB 141 - Expanding county assessment and collection of head tax on breeding cows

- SB 322 - Relating to employees of Department of Agriculture (authorizes the department to employ an attorney)
- SB 375 - Relating to farmers markets (transfers authority from DHHR to WVDA and allows micro processing permits)
- SB 446 - Creating Agritourism Responsibility Act
- SB 463 - Establishing group to examine benefits and need of transferring milk rules and regulations from DHHR to Agriculture
- SB 475 - Industrial Hemp Development Act

**Budget changes:**

- General Revenue Appropriation of \$250,000 to Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture Program.
- Combined Charleston, Huntington and Logan Farmers Market General Revenue Appropriations line items to a “WV Farmers Markets General Revenue Appropriation”. This will enable the department to help additional farmers markets around the state.
- Additional General Revenue Appropriation of \$323,490 for the 5 percent state employee raise.

For more information, contact WVDA Communications Director Crescent Gallagher at [cgallagher@wvda.us](mailto:cgallagher@wvda.us) or 304-558-3708.

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