



## Providing United States Winegrape Growers a Voice

### Newsletter

#### **FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATES**

##### **WGA President's Budget Released**

On March 9, 2023, President Biden released his Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Budget Request to Congress. The \$6.9 trillion request includes \$1.7 trillion for discretionary federal spending-- \$885 billion for defense and approximately \$809 billion for veteran's health and non-defense programs, including programs that are critical for the wine industry.

The FY 2024 request provides:

- \$1,994 million (an increase of more than \$100 million over 2023 funding) for the Agricultural Research Service
- \$241 million (an increase of \$30 million) for the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) which could fund Vineyard Survey
- \$189 million for the Market Access Program
- \$8 million for technical assistance for Specialty Crops, funding these programs at the same level as in 2022-2023
- A request of \$222 million was made for Specialty Crops--a \$6 million increase above the program's FY 2023 funding
- FY 2024 request for APHIS specialty crop pests remains the same as 2023 at \$23 million
- Funding for the Farm Service Agency, which supports farm loans, conservation, disaster assistance and related programs, totals \$1,676 million, which is an increase of seven percent over its 2023 funding, but still well below its 2022 funding level of \$4,577 million
- The budget provides an increase for Tree Assistance Program (TAP) funding from \$11 million in 2023 to \$17 million
- The FY 2024 budget also includes \$2.97 billion for the US Forest Service's wildland fire and hazardous fuels management
- Funds staffing resources for USDA to implement the 2023 Farm bill

No funding was requested for the Office of the Chief Scientist's Alcohol Consumption Study; \$1 million was provided for this study in 2023.

## **Farm Bill**

The Farm Bill, which is usually passed by Congress every five years, authorizes programs within the Department of Agriculture. These programs are then funded through the annual appropriations bills, within the program limits that may be specified in the Farm Bill. The last Farm Bill was the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018, **which expires on September 30, 2023**. Congress needs to pass a new Farm Bill by the end of September 2023 to reauthorize these programs/agencies and ensure their continued existence.

Key programs in the Farm Bill that are essential for the grape and wine industry include:

- Market Access Program (MAP)
- Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI)
- Grape research by the Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
- Specialty Crop Block Grants (SCBG)
- Plant Pest and Disease Programs
- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)
- National Clean Plant Program (NCPN)
- Crop Insurance

## **FY 2024 Appropriations Requests**

Congress has begun accepting requests for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 appropriations bills. Winegrape Growers of America has submitted three requests to key subcommittee members for the FY 2024 Agriculture Appropriations Act:

- Proposed Report Language: *Smoke Exposure.— The Committee is concerned about the impacts of wildfire smoke on winegrape producers and supports research to help growers and processors establish science-based threshold levels of smoke compounds that cause smoke-tainted grapes, identify the compounds responsible for smoke taints, develop mitigation methods to reduce or eliminate smoke taint, and conduct research into compounds that can act as a barrier between the grapes and the smoke compounds. The Committee provides \$5,000,000 for this research.*
- Proposed Bill Language: *None of the funds made available by this or any other Act may be used to enforce any provisions of the final rule promulgated by the Food and Drug Administration entitled “Standards for the Growing, Harvesting, Packing, and Holding of Produce for Human Consumption,” and published on November 27, 2015, as amended, with respect to the regulation of entities that grow, harvest, pack, or hold wine grapes, hops, pulse crops, or almonds.*
- Proposed Report Language: *The Committee directs NASS to reinstate the 5-year Vineyard and Orchard Acreage Study and resume data collection and reporting so grape, wine, and juice producers can remain competitive and respond to challenges in the industry.*

Winegrape Growers of America successfully advocated for including the language supporting smoke exposure research and prohibiting enforcement of the Produce Safety Rule for winegrapes in the FY 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act. Although the FY 2023 act also included language for reinstating NASS vineyard surveys, these surveys have not yet been resumed.

## **Membership for 2023/2024 Coming Soon!**

We represent the interests of growers impacted by public policies that affect their bottom line. Invoices for the 2023/2024 fiscal year will come out in late April/early May! The growth in membership the past year has been encouraging and our goal is to get every state with a grower related organization as a member! If you have questions, contact us at 509.782.8234 or email [vicky@wawinegrowers.org](mailto:vicky@wawinegrowers.org).

## **TTB Nutritional Labeling And Ingredient Listing Ruling**

Content from WineAmerica: *TTB Label proposal will affect all alcohol: wine, beer, spirits*

In brief:

- TTB expected to issue rulemaking this year according to TTB's unified agenda
- Executive Order on competition –TTB response was that alcohol industry should be disclosing this nutritional info
- Earlier proposed rulemaking, opposed by industry due to impacts on label/marketing, no established standards for data—would cause excessive cost to producers; statement of calories, carbohydrates, fat, protein; did not include ingredient labeling
  - Wine not consumed for nutritional purposes

What is expected to happen:

- Mandate for nutritional listing
- 3 rulemakings starting in May
  - Advanced notice on rulemaking on ingredient labeling – public comment period
  - Nutritional data
  - Allergens
- Tolerances allowed for calorie content
- Nutritional labeling to include calories, fat, carbohydrates, protein for 5.5 oz serving
- Omnibus bill required update to Congress on this issue
- Off label option—EU is allowing QR code off label

Spirits and beer producer's stance:

- Large beer producers have been disclosing info for years in regard to lite beer
- Craft beer producers do not yet have formal position
- Distilled spirits have pledged to disclose info for 2 oz serving this year

Specific issues:

- Variation in vintage be accommodation in labeling requirements
- Will TTB require listing FDA-approved wine additives
- Impact on wine that is under 7% alcohol:
  - Ingredient labeling
  - TTB requirements for panel format
  - Scan option for this info or list on website
  - Avoid large panel on label
  - New COLAs requirements