



PO BOX 726, ORANGEBURG, SC 29116

803-534-0358

RE: COUNTY FAIR

12-14-14

Dear Mrs. Haley,

I represent the Orangeburg County Fair, we are in a rebuilding stage of joining our community back to the fairgrounds. We have just completed our 104th year here in Orangeburg.

We are reaching out to you for funding to help educate our youth on the importance of agriculture, healthy living, community support and family. Being a small county fair, there is no extras for building maintenance or much needed repairs. It is essential to put the families of Orangeburg County and surrounding counties citizens back where we need to be.

We understand that there is several programs that you may be able to assist us with in retaining funds for projects here at the fairgrounds.

We greatly appreciate your input on this matter.

Thank You,

Rodney Barr



tukwila reporter

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Small community, youth fairs gain funding from legislators | State Legislature

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by KATHY JAWORSKI, Tukwila Reporter Reporter
Feb 29, 2012 at 6:37PM

Financial help for community and youth fairs has advanced through the state legislature and now awaits the governor's signature to unleash the funding resource.

The measure sailed through both House and Senate with no opposition despite operating budget proposals aimed at drastically cutting money to the state's Fair Fund.

Minority Caucus Vice Chair, Rep. Judy Warnick (R-Moses Lake) is prime sponsor of House Bill 2356, which allows organizers of small community and youth fairs to request capital funding for health and safety projects.

"We realized that the smaller fairs, which are struggling just like everyone else, could not apply (under current rules). This bill would open it up so that the smaller ones are eligible for these grants," said Warnick.

The funds enumerated in the legislation are administered as grants by the Department of Agriculture.

Last year the state's capital budget appropriated \$1 million from state bonds to area and county fairs, specifically for health and safety projects. Before that, \$2.2 million was stretched over eight years for the same upkeep.

These projects include updating electrical wiring, installing parking-lot lighting, renovating to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and replacing rotting barns throughout fairgrounds.

Betty Backstrom, secretary for the Lacamas Community Fair, said that her group would be interested in requesting capital funding because their two-acre fairground facilities need to be updated because of some safety issues.

"We have a concrete floor and it's cracked and one half of it is raising up and now it's getting to the point where people are tripping over it," said Backstrom.

For the larger fairs to receive this funding, the agriculture department would hold a competitive application process in which the county or area fairs have to be evaluated by the state fair commission.



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According to Kelly Frost, program coordinator with the Department of Agriculture, the competitive process entails a ranking system that prioritizes the capital projects for funding.

Frost said those fairs that provide an in-kind match are many times scored higher because it shows they are committed to the project.

The bill proposes the 12 youth fairs and 17 community fairs join the 37 county and area fairs in this competitive process. Once ranked, the fair officials would work with the Department of Agriculture to comply with contracts.

"The youth and community fairs funding has been fairly static for the last several years," said Frost. "Provided they continue to meet qualifications, they would get a set amount."

Fair officials who don't follow through with the project would be ordered to repay the state General Fund the grant support provided.

Events such as Lacamas Community Fair, Stanwood-Camano Community Fair and Wheatland Community Fair are more financially insecure because they rarely have other sources of revenue and often rely on state funding for capital projects, according to Heather Hansen legislative liaison for the Washington State Fair Association.

In addition to non-profit fairs, small community fairs need support because many are unable to "charge at the gate or have a carnival," Hansen said.

Fair organizers agree that youth fairs are the most vulnerable if money from the Fair Fund is cut, which is what the House operating budget proposes.

"We are desperate around here to upgrade our outdoor restrooms, but that might be a project that won't get done again this year because we have to come up with that money from the [possible] shortfall," said Kimberly Burden, manager of Stanwood-Camano Community Fair.

While there is \$1 million allocated to fairs in the current biennial capital budget, which expires June 30, 2013, there is uncertainty of whether the operating budget money will continue after this legislative session. Burden speaks to this concern.

Jason Kelly, spokesman with the Washington State Department of Agriculture, said that the proposed supplemental House operating budget calls for a complete cut in fair funding while the Senate's proposal makes no reductions.

The legislature faces a near \$1.5 billion budget shortfall and lawmakers have proposed severe cuts in many areas in order to balance funding for priorities such as education and healthcare.

There has yet to be a final decision on the revised 2011-2013 state supplemental operation budget.

But the House version suggests a \$1.75 million cut to the \$3.5 million given last year to the Fair Fund, according to Kelly, and fair officials such as Greg Stewart, president of the Central Washington State Fair, believe that the issue is much deeper than premium money being taken away.

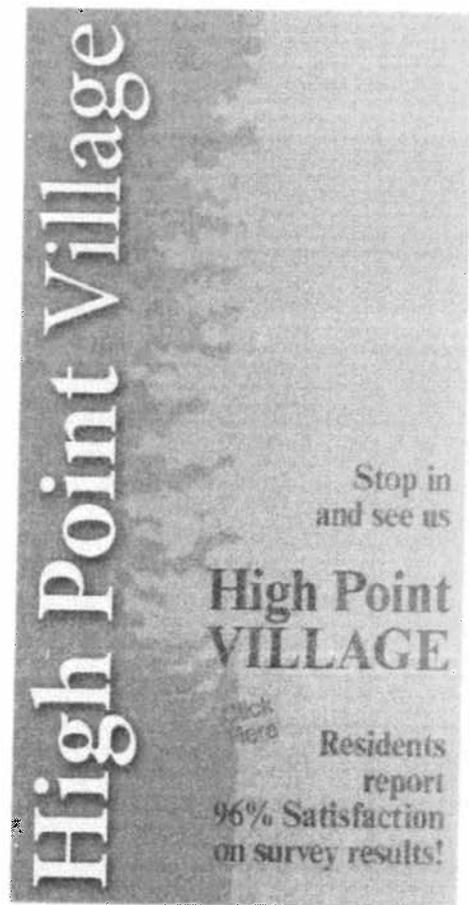
"We could possibly lose half of our fairs," said Stewart. "If you factor in all that fairs do... \$2 million isn't a large sum."

Stewart explained that Washington's 70-some fairs generate about \$25 million in sales taxes, but even more important they act as the largest outdoor classroom to children who attend and participate in them.

Gov. Christine Gregoire's operating budget proposal takes away more in that it strikes \$3 million from the Fair Fund, leaving \$500,000 specifically for community and youth fairs, but nothing for county and area fairs.

"Fairs use the money retroactively," said Hansen. "The check they get from the Fair Fund is, technically, to cover expenses from the past year."

"The money that we get from the state is air-marked by the state, and by us, for trophies, premiums, plaques and ribbons," said Burden. "We would need to make up for that shortfall because that is one area we can't see cutting, not even a dime."



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Burden said that if this is what it comes down to, asking community members for help could be an option, in addition to making other cuts.

Youth shows and 4-H fairs, which usually serve multiple counties, are meant in a large part to educate and train youth in agricultural affairs, according to fair officials.

Hansen explained that these types of fairs are often the most affecting in children's lives, but concurs that they could also face closure if state officials halt support.

"During the time [children] spend at those fairs they learn teamwork, showmanship, public speaking, confidence, so many life skills that are going to be with them forever," said Hansen.

If signed by the governor, the bill to open up capital funding for community and youth fairs would take effect 90 days after the end of the legislative session. The state operating budget remains in two versions before the House and Senate respectively. The versions need to be merged and approved in both houses before the final budget reaches the governor's desk.

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