**RESOLUTION # 25**

**FARM EQUIPMENT AND HIGHWAY SAFETY**

**WHEREAS,** farmers from throughout the state have reported an increase in accidents or “close calls” on the roads from drivers trying to pass around their farm equipment; and

**WHEREAS**, there appears to be a lack of understanding of the motor vehicle regulations regarding interactions among motorists and those driving farm equipment on the roads, and even among those teaching people how to drive, as some of the recent close calls have involved cars marked as driver-education vehicles; and

**WHEREAS**, accidents involving large farm vehicles can have significant consequences for both farmers and the other drivers, including serious injury or death, and protracted, expensive civil court cases resulting from accidents; and

**WHEREAS**, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture is in a unique position to better educate the motoring public about the need for patience when drivers find themselves behind slower-moving farm vehicles: and

**WHEREAS,** high school driver’s education courses, as well as NJ Motor Vehicle Commission offices and Rutgers Cooperative Extension offices throughout the state, are logical choices for places where the video could be shown to educate current and future drivers about the need for caution around slow-moving farm vehicles; and

**WHEREAS**, “National Farm Safety and Health Week,” held each September as harvest season kicks off, and which this past September included “Equipment and Rural Roadway Safety” as the first day’s topic of discussion, would be the ideal time to highlight this issue; and

**WHEREAS**, it would help drive home the seriousness of the issue if the Legislature were to pass, and the Governor sign, legislation to increase the fines for illegally passing farm equipment on the road, especially in cases where such unsafe passing results in an accident.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 109th State Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 7-8, 2024, do hereby direct the Department to increase messaging about highway safety around farm equipment on the road through all messaging channels, including social media such as Facebook, the Department website, etc., and including a video produced by the Department about road safety around farm equipment that could be played at Motor Vehicle Commission offices statewide.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we direct the Department to especially highlight outreach on the video it produced about this issue during the annual “National Farm Safety and Health Week” in September each year.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we direct the Department to endeavor to have these messages inserted into the Driver’s Education programs in schools throughout the state, including the use of the video mentioned above and the creation of a pamphlet or other materials on the issue.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that funds should be identified that could facilitate the placement of more signage on roads where farm equipment is likely to travel to alert motorists to the need to slow down and, where possible, avoid trying to pass farm equipment due to the danger of oncoming traffic that the motorist may not see around the farm equipment, including a discussion on whether legislation could be introduced to increase the fines for violating highway laws regarding farm equipment.