

Sen. Testin: Weekly GOP radio address

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Temperatures are dropping, leaves are falling, and Wisconsin farmers are putting the finishing touches on another harvest season.

Hi, I'm State Senator Patrick Testin from Stevens Point. Recently, I had the unique opportunity to join Mike and Deb, a Central Wisconsin couple on their farm for one of the state's first legal hemp harvests in over sixty years.

Wisconsin has a history as a national leader in industrial hemp production. Unfortunately, hemp's relationship to marijuana caused the federal government to ban its cultivation - even though it has no intoxicating effects.

Thankfully, things are changing.

The 2014 federal farm bill paved the way for states to create pilot programs to research growing and marketing hemp. This session, I worked to craft a bi-partisan bill called the Farm Freedom Act. This bill, which passed both houses of the legislature unanimously, enabled our farmers to reintroduce hemp to Wisconsin. Governor Walker signed it into law late last year.

And so I found myself harvesting hemp on a crisp fall morning.

Farming is both a business and a way of life. Wisconsin farmers face many

challenges. Weather, long hours, and low commodity prices can all take their toll. Still, our farmers are national and global leaders in the production of dairy, potatoes, ginseng, cranberries, beef, pork, corn, and soybeans.

By enabling farmers to diversify with industrial hemp, they have one more way to make a living and our state has one more way to lead the nation.