

Rep. Vruwink: Introduces small farm diversity grant as part of “Our Farms, Our Future” legislation

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Rep. Don Vruwink joined a bipartisan group of legislators this week to introduce three bills known collectively as “Our Farms, Our Future.”

These bills, if enacted, will strengthen opportunities for Wisconsin farmers at every stage of their careers: from beginning farmers who are launching their career, to new and established farmers looking to innovate and diversify, to retiring farmers who are passing on their operation to the next generation.

Vruwink (D-Milton) introduced the bill with Rep. Travis Tranel (R-Cuba City), Rep. LaKeshia Myers (D-Milwaukee), Sen. Jeff Smith (D-Eau Claire), and Sen. Janis Ringhand (D-Evansville).

“Wisconsin is blessed with an abundance of well-educated, energetic people who want to start new farming operations or grow their existing farms,” Vruwink said. “While cows, corn, and cranberries will remain a cornerstone of our agricultural economy, we have tremendous opportunities to grow and diversify. The Small Farm Diversity grant will be awarded on a competitive basis where the best and brightest proposals rise to the top.”

The “Our Farms, Our Future” bills are circulating for co-sponsorship by other legislators. If enacted, the other bills that were announced Tuesday will:

§ Create two new positions in the University of Wisconsin System to help farmers create succession plans to hand down their operations to future generations.

§ Award grants to qualified beginning farmers to pay down their student debt.