

Rep. Shankland: Bipartisan bill to support farmers and conservation signed into law

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MADISON—Rep. Katrina Shankland (D-Steven Point) recently joined Governor Tony Evers and legislators from both parties at a bill signing ceremony as Assembly Bill 133 was signed into law, becoming 2023 Wisconsin Act 42. Following the ceremony, Rep. Katrina Shankland released the following statement:

“Agriculture is vital to our state’s economy, and beyond that, farming is inseparable from our state’s heritage and identity. The Farmland Preservation Program ensures the protection of our Wisconsin farmland, supporting our soil and water quality by ensuring farmers adopt the best conservation practices that protect groundwater and surface water, limit erosion, and ensure Wisconsin farmland is usable for generations to come.

“While land available for farming and agriculture has dwindled, we have also seen participation in the Farmland Preservation Program dropping significantly, according to DATCP’s 2018 program survey. In that survey, respondents reported numerous factors as being prohibitive to signing a farmland agreement, including the 15-year minimum contract being too long, the tax credits being too small to make it worthwhile, and concerns with how they can use their land throughout the duration of the contract. Our new law addresses these concerns by reducing the minimum contract time, boosting the per-acre tax credits, and tackling the barriers to entering a farmland preservation agreement. This will likely enroll more farmers and additional acreage in the program, putting more money in farmers’ pockets while also increasing conservation in Wisconsin. We can all agree that preserving our state’s farmland isn’t just pivotal to our economy, but also to our proud Wisconsin heritage.

“I am very proud of the bipartisan work on this important legislation, as we first recommended this in the Speaker’s Task Force on Water Quality, for which I served as Vice Chair. After years of hard work, it’s great to see lawmakers from both parties come together to support farmers and water quality in Wisconsin.”

2023 Wisconsin Act 42 helps improve the Farmland Preservation Program, aiming to enroll more producers and acreage in this program through several more attractive tax credits and eligibility changes:

- Reduces the minimum required length of a farmland preservation agreement between DATCP and a farmland owner from 15 to 10 years
- Increases the tax credit available from \$7.50 to \$10 for qualifying acres located in a farmland preservation zoning district but not subject to a farmland preservation agreement
- Increases the tax credit available from \$5 to \$10 for qualifying acres subject to a farmland preservation agreement but not located in a farmland preservation zoning district
- Increases the tax credit available from \$10 to \$12.50 for qualifying acres located in a farmland preservation zoning district and are subject to a farmland preservation agreement
- Creates a new category and a \$10 per acre credit for farmland that is located in a farmland preservation area, but only to the extent that the acres are covered by an agricultural conservation easement