

# Sen. Cowles, Rep. Murphy: Applaud signing of airport safety legislation

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MADISON – Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) and Representative Dave Murphy (R-Greenville) released the following statement after the Governor signed Senate Bill 208, which they authored with Senator Rachael Cabral-Guevara and Representative Ron Tusler, into law as 2023 Wisconsin Act 51:

“Nuisance wildlife can pose a serious threat to give air travelers, pilots, grounds crew, and airport property,” Senator Cowles stated. “In the past three decades, nearly 3,000 airplane-wildlife strikes have occurred in Wisconsin. These collisions have been increasing nationwide, and cause hundreds of millions of dollars in damages annually. In the worst case scenario, they can even cause plane crashes. But today’s new law makes it easier for trained officials at our state’s many airports, both big and small, to simply do their jobs better, and keep our airports safe from the dangers of nuisance wildlife.”

“I’m happy to join with Senator Cowles to make airports both big and small safer for everyone who flies,” said Representative Murphy.

Act 51 adds airport personnel seeking to control nuisance wildlife at airports to certain statutory exemptions on the use of firearms. Preexisting state statutes and Federal Aviation Administration regulations require non-lethal efforts to be made to limit the impact of nuisance wildlife at airports, in an attempt to reduce the risk of damage to planes and their potential occupants. However, when these non-lethal wildlife management efforts fail, shooting wildlife may be the safest option to eliminate the threat. Act 51 simply aligns with national best-management practices to safely dispatch nuisance wildlife in a way that protects human safety and property.

This legislation came to Senator Cowles and Representative Murphy from reports by the Outagamie County Airport, and has been supported by various local airports and governments across Wisconsin.