

Sen. Spreitzer: Bipartisan farmland preservation bill signed into law

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MADISON - Today, Governor Tony Evers signed into law a bipartisan bill authored by Sen. Mark Spreitzer to strengthen and update our state's farmland preservation program. Senator Mark Spreitzer (D-Beloit) released the following statement after Governor Evers signed 2023 Assembly Bill 133, now 2023 Wisconsin Act 42, into law:

"I am deeply proud and grateful that the farmland preservation program bill was signed into law today," said Sen. Spreitzer. "The Land Conservation staff in Rock County first brought this issue to my attention in 2019, and I have been working with my colleagues over the last two legislative sessions to ensure it becomes law. I would like to thank the bipartisan coauthors of this bill - including Rep. Loren Oldenburg (R-Viroqua), Sen. Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point), Sen. Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee) and Sen. Brad Pfaff (D-Onalaska) - who helped ensure this crucial legislation to support our farmers and protect our environment made it across the finish line."

2023 Wisconsin Act 42 will maintain and increase participation in the farmland preservation program by increasing farmland preservation tax credit amounts and making other updates to the program. The farmland preservation program provides a refundable, per-acre tax credit to farmers that commit to keeping their land in agricultural use and that certify compliance with state soil and water conservation standards. Prior to this act's enactment, farmland preservation tax credit amounts had not been increased since 2009. Because the cost of the required soil and water conservation standards and agricultural inputs did increase over this period, enrollment in the program has declined over the last decade. From 2013 through 2022, the number of participants decreased by 29% and the number of enrolled acres decreased by 23%.

“This important act addresses the two top issues named by Wisconsin farmers that prevent them from participating in the farmland preservation program: it increases the farmland preservation tax credit amounts for the first time since 2009, and will allow greater flexibility for farmers by decreasing the length of farmland preservation agreement contracts,” said Sen. Spreitzer. “The bill also requires the Department of Agriculture, Trade, & Consumer Protection (DATCP) and the legislature to regularly review the program and tax credit amounts to ensure that the program meets the needs of Wisconsin farmers into the future.”

Sen. Spreitzer stated, “I am deeply grateful to the bipartisan coalition of legislators, agriculture and conservation groups, and farmers that worked together to pass this new law with strong bipartisan support in both houses of the legislature. I also want to thank Governor Tony Evers and DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski for their partnership and leadership on this legislation. I look forward to seeing the positive impacts of this act on farmers and our local communities for decades to come – both in our district and across the state.”