



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Sen. Testin and Rep. Goyke: “One Step Closer to Passing WI Veterans Farm Bill of 2017”

Proposal Would Create Program at DATCP to Recruit Veterans into Farming

Madison, WI – A bi-partisan group of legislators, led by Sen. Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point) and Rep. Evan Goyke (D-Milwaukee) is one step closer to passing a bill that would create a program to recruit military veterans into farming and authorize the creation of a logotype for veteran farmer products.

The Wisconsin Veterans Farm Bill of 2017, which is co-authored by Rep. Ed Brooks (R-Reedsburg) and Sen. Janis Ringhand (D-Evansville) passed unanimously through the Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs last week, and had a positive hearing in the Senate Agriculture, Small Business, and Tourism earlier today.

“It’s been encouraging to see such a strong affirmative reaction to this legislation from both sides of the aisle and from all different walks of life,” said Rep. Goyke. “Republicans, Democrats, urban and rural farmers, and their respective communities– this is a bill that everyone can get behind.”

Tony Kurtz, an organic farmer from Wonewoc who served for 20 years in the Army, spoke in support of the bill. “I believe farming is a natural fit for many veterans,” said Kurtz. “At least for me, and other veterans that I know, we like to see results - and in farming you definitely see results, some good and some not so good....I know that veterans have that dedication to succeed in this demanding profession.”

While the bill focuses on reinforcing the agricultural workforce and giving consumers the opportunity to choose veteran produced goods, it could also have some unseen benefits.

Brian Sales, an Army veteran who served in Iraq and Kosovo, has transitioned into agriculture and also co-founded the Green Veterans Group, which helps veterans learn about sustainable building and green living. He says this helped him find “...a new mission, a new sense of purpose, a renewed commitment to service, and ultimately, a passion for farming.”

“Studies have shown that rigorous physical work like the type that farmers do on a daily basis, can have a therapeutic effect for those with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD),” added Sen. Testin. “In the three years since West Virginia created a similar program to the one we are proposing, eight veterans have publicly testified that their involvement kept them from suicide. This bill can have very real, powerful results.”

The bill is ready for a vote of the full Assembly, which the authors hope will happen in late summer or early fall.

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