



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

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Marklein's Farm Teaching Hours Bill Passes Senate

Teaching in the field and on the farm to count toward university requirements.

Madison, WI – Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) today announced the State Senate passed Senate Bill (SB) 79 today. This bill is now before the State Assembly for consideration.

SB 79 changes the law to count hours of teaching on the farm or in the field toward university teaching hours. In current law, UW Extension specialists who teach farmers outside of the traditional college setting are not able to count this time toward their teaching time on the university's accountability dashboard. This bill changes the law to count these hours.

Marklein authored this bill at the request of Wisconsin agriculture groups who indicated that current law is a barrier for Extension Specialists to teach on the farm and in the field.

"The hours Extension Specialists spend teaching our farmers and conveying the most innovative farm practices to our growers should be tracked and recorded similarly to the in-person teaching established by the Board of Regents for UW-Madison and UW-System faculty. This knowledge is invaluable to our \$104.8 billion agricultural economy in Wisconsin," Sen. Marklein said. "I would rather they teach on the farm and make it count where it is needed, than arbitrarily limit them to a traditional classroom setting. The ideas, innovation and advice Extension Specialists provide to our farmers is essential to the health of our ag economy."

Extension Specialists are University of Wisconsin campus-based faculty and staff who are funded by the Division of Extension at UW-Madison. They provide expertise on a wide range of topics related to agriculture and natural resources. Their research is highly technical, is reviewed by peer scientists around the world, and is used by farmers in Wisconsin every day.

In addition to conducting research projects, these researchers teach farmers at association-sponsored summer and winter meetings; hold on-farm mini clinics, field days, and workshops; and provide other direct instruction to Wisconsin farmers on a daily basis.

"Their value to the agricultural economy as teachers is well-documented, but their work teaching farmers unfortunately, cannot currently be used to satisfy the statutory "teaching hours" reporting and monitoring obligations for UW-Madison and UW-System faculty under current law," Sen. Marklein said. "This bill makes these important hours count."

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