



ELLEN SCHUTT

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 31ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Governor Evers Rejects Preserving Farmland

Madison, WI – Earlier today, Governor Tony Evers vetoed a bill authored by Representative Ellen Schutt (R-Clinton) that would have insured that those claiming the farmland preservation tax credit were truly farming the land and preserving its resources for future generations.

The farmland preservation program was created to provide property tax relief to farmland owners, preserve our rich soil and water resources in our state, and encourage local governments to develop farmland preservation policies. In recent years, we have seen a substantial increase in the construction of solar panels on rich Wisconsin farmland.

In response, Representative Schutt issued the following statement:

“To say I’m disappointed would be an understatement. Governor Evers has decided that your tax dollars should continue subsidizing large-scale solar energy projects through Wisconsin’s farmland preservation program.

“I introduced this legislation after discussions with state and local officials. We determined that a loophole exists in current law that allows someone to claim the farmland preservation tax credit even after building an energy generating facility on part of the land. For example, if someone owns 1,000 acres in the farmland preservation program, and builds a solar energy facility on 500 acres of that, the person will still receive 100% of the farmland preservation tax credit.

“My bill that was vetoed would have prohibited a person from claiming the farmland preservation tax credit if a portion of the person’s land had a solar energy system installed on it and the solar energy system did not add to the agricultural use of the farm.

“Installation of large solar panel systems permanently damage land. The installation process requires wires to be placed underground, digging a minimum of four feet into the ground and displacing irreplaceable topsoil. This jeopardizes the future viability of growing anything on it.

“Legislative Democrats and Governor Evers need to recognize that Wisconsin's valuable farmland will continue to diminish – all at the expense of taxpayers – until this loophole is addressed. My bill would have made sure that the farmland preservation program would continue to work as it was intended: to protect the land, allow Wisconsin’s farms to be passed down to the next generation, and maintain our state’s great agricultural tradition.”

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Wisconsin’s 31st Assembly District includes portions of Rock and Walworth Counties.