



PATRICK TESTIN STATE SENATOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sen. Testin introduces bipartisan seed potato legislation

MADISON, Wis. – Sen. Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point) has formally introduced bipartisan legislation that aims to uphold Wisconsin’s status as a national leader in potato production.

More specifically, Senate Bill 164 helps protect the viability of Wisconsin’s commercial potato industry and the availability of clean, pathogen-free seed in the state.

“This legislation is important to me because Wisconsin is the third largest producer of potatoes in the country, with the 24th Senate District generating the bulk of our state’s potato crop,” Sen. Testin said. “In addition, Wisconsin is a top 5 state in churning out seed potatoes.”

Since 1913, the Wisconsin Seed Potato Certification Program has been at the forefront of inspecting and certifying the state’s seed potatoes. The key objective of the program is to preserve clean, varietally-pure, pathogen-free tissue culture of potatoes. The WSPCP Tissue Culture & Diagnostics Laboratory currently maintains approximately 300 disease-free potato lines.

Current state law requires any person who plants five or more acres of potatoes to use certified seed potatoes.

“During the 2023 growing season, a couple of bad actors planted seed potatoes in violation of state statutes,” Sen. Testin said. “However, the enforcement authority and penalties that are available under current law to deter those actions were not effective. The planting of these potentially harmful seed potatoes in close proximity to valuable seed potato acres not only put that existing seed crop at risk, but also endangered the availability of clean, viable seed for future growing seasons.”

SB 164 seeks to remedy such issues by providing the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection with additional enforcement authority and by increasing the penalties for breaking the state’s seed potato laws.

“The legislation is modeled after Wisconsin’s late blight statute, which was similarly updated in 2017 and has worked extremely well in helping control and prevent the spread of late blight in our state’s commercial potato crops,” Sen. Testin added.

SB 164 is scheduled to receive a public hearing on Thursday in front of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Revenue.

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