

SCOTT SUDER

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Rep. Suder Fighting to Protect Local Farmers

Lawmaker Introduces Bill to Make Livestock Premise Registrations Voluntary – Says Family Farmers Shouldn't be Prosecuted for Protecting Their Livelihoods

Abbotsford... Rep. Scott Suder (R-Abbotsford) introduced legislation today in Madison that he says will protect the property rights of small family farmers who have recently been taken to court to force them to register their farms with the state. The northern lawmaker's bill will make livestock premise registrations voluntary, rather than mandatory in Wisconsin.

"At a time when many family farms are struggling to keep the barn doors open, now is not the time for the state to be threatening farmers who refuse to register their farms with a lawsuit," Suder said. "In an economic crisis where every job counts and every business matters, we should be doing everything we can to protect our farmers, not threatening them with lawsuits that could very well put them out of business."

The Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) currently requires any person who keeps livestock to register their property and provide a description of the operation and types of animals raised at the location to the state. DATCP has the authority under current law to create exemptions to the premise registration requirements through the rules process. Suder says the department has chosen not to allow any exemptions to the premise registrations in Wisconsin. The lawmaker said this strict mandate broke a promise DATCP made to the Legislature when the Premise Registration Act was signed into law in 2004.

"DATCP told many of us who had concerns about mandating premise registrations that exemptions would be written to protect the rights of family farmers," Suder said. "That didn't happen and now we are seeing lawsuits popping up around the state threatening to sue farmers for thousands of dollars for not registering. Even the USDA strongly believes that the best approach to premise registrations is a voluntary system led by the states. I believe we should follow the federal government's recommendations and make premise registrations voluntary in Wisconsin."

Wisconsin is one of only two states that require mandatory premise registrations. In fact, five states (Utah, Arizona, Kentucky, Missouri, and Nebraska) have adopted laws banning mandatory premise and animal identifications as part of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). Illinois, Arkansas, Montana, and Texas are considering similar proposals. According to recent estimates, only a third of producers nationwide have chosen to register their farms in the past five years.

Rep. Suder said he anticipates bipartisan support for the bill as it moves through the legislative process this spring.

Representative Suder welcomes your comments on this and other issues. For more information, please feel free to contact Rep. Suder at (888) 534-0069 or e-mail him at Rep.Suder@legis.state.wi.us.