
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5419

AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRESERVATION OF THE SAVIN FARM IN LEBANON.

SUMMARY:

This bill establishes a procedure to preserve and manage the Department of Agriculture's (DoAg) "Savin Farm" property in Lebanon.

The bill requires DoAg to grant a permanent conservation easement on the farm to a nonprofit organization. The easement must be based on a horizontal Class A-2 (boundary) survey obtained by the DoAg commissioner.

Under the bill, the easement must (1) provide for conservation of the farm for agricultural use, conducted according to a federally prepared and DoAg-approved conservation plan, and (2) allow the commissioner to lease, permit, or license any part of the farm to one or more people or entities for that use. The proposed easement and any proposed DoAg lease, permit, or license is subject to State Properties Review Board review and approval. The board must complete its review within 30 days after receiving the proposal.

The bill exempts the leased, permitted, or licensed property from local property taxes and adds its value to the assessed value of state-owned land and buildings for calculating payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT). By law, the state must reimburse towns for 45% of their lost revenue from most state-owned property.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

PERMANENT CONSERVATION EASEMENT

The bill requires the primary mission of the nonprofit organization receiving the permanent conservation easement to be protecting

agricultural land for agricultural use.

The easement must provide that all agricultural activity conducted on the farm be done according to a conservation plan (1) prepared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and (2) approved by the commissioner.

The bill requires the conservation plan to provide for farm management consistent with (1) generally accepted agricultural practices, including those in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide and (2) protecting the farm's agricultural and conservation values. The plan must be updated periodically and when the farm's agricultural operation changes.

USE OF THE FARM

Under the bill, the DoAg leases, permits, or licenses must (1) have a term of up to 15 years and (2) require compliance with the permanent conservation easement. They are renewable for up to 15 years.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 24 Nay 4 (03/17/2014)