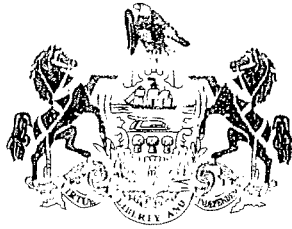


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TO: All House Members
FROM: Rep. Chris Ross *CR*
DATE: January 12, 2011
SUBJECT: Proposed Legislation
Agricultural Conservation Easements – Prior HB 505

In the near future, I will be reintroducing HB 505 from last session. This bill would correct two problems for farmers who have placed their land under an agricultural conservation easement with the state.

First, some farmers wish to allow for a trail easement through their property. These easements may provide them some tax benefits or possibly an additional source of direct income. Currently, the Department of Agriculture does not allow for this additional easement on the property. In addition to frustrating the farmers' intention, this policy also makes it difficult to establish continuity in the trail systems. I have inserted language which limits the extent of the trails and requires that they be constructed in such a way so that they do not diminish the agricultural productivity in a significant way. These easements can only be created with the fully voluntary cooperation of the farmer.

Second, the current agricultural easement program explicitly allows for the creation of one additional farmstead residence. Sometimes, farmers do not need this additional residence and wish to further reduce the value of the property for a tax write-off or to make it easier to pass on to the next generation at a lower value. Current policy of the Department of Agriculture does not allow for the extinguishment of this right to an additional farmstead. I believe that the farmer should be allowed to exercise his or her judgment, based on their individual circumstances. This option would also be purely voluntary for the farmer.

If you wish to cosponsor this legislation, please contact my office at:

Groupwise: Dixie Minnich or Rita Markle
E-Mail: dminnich@pahousegop.com or rmarkle@pahousegop.com
Telephone: 717-783-1574

CR/dlm

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