

Right Time for Right to Farm

By unanimous votes in both State House and Senate, Texans will have the opportunity to vote for a constitutional amendment protecting urban-encroached farmers and ranchers from egregious zoning, ordinances, and lawsuits limiting the use of their farmland.

One of the many interesting topics of our recent RLAT meeting was HJR 126, or commonly known as, “Right to Farm and Ranch” passed the House on a 144-0 vote and signed May 5th, and passed in the Senate with a 31-0 vote and signed May 8th. The measure now heads to the Nov. 7th statewide ballot.

This measure is not an attempt to protect our historical agrarian roots, but to ensure the continuity of food and agricultural production for future generations. Texas loses over 240,000 acres of farm and ranch land each year to urban growth, development, and restrictions on use of property, according to the Texas Land and Water Conservation Coalition.

Texas Farm Bureau President Russell Boening stated to the Morning Ag Clips the constitutional amendment specifies people have the right to engage in generally accepted farm, ranch, timber production, horticulture, or wildlife management practices on real property they own or lease. He went on to say that Texas continues to rapidly increase in population, and it’s critical that farmers and ranchers be able to grow food, fiber and fuel for our state and nation as more and more agricultural areas are impacted by development and population growth.

First proposed on February 24, 2023, the amendment has its roots in The Texas Right to Farm statute, found in the Texas Agricultural Code at Section 251.001 to 251.006, and enacted by the Texas Legislature in 1981. The purpose of the Texas Right to Farm statute is to “conserve, protect, and encourage the development and improvement of its agricultural land for the production of food and other agricultural products.” Specifically, the statute limits the circumstances in which an agricultural operation may be considered to be a nuisance. For a comprehensive history of this statute see <https://agrillife.org/texasaglaw/2013/07/24/texas-right-to-farm-law/>

This amendment is long overdue as we are now seeing record growth of Texas urban centers, and the threat to essential family farms and ranches which contribute over \$115 billion to the state economy. (TLWCC)

The most meaningful agricultural legislation in many years now is the right time for this Right to Farm & Ranch amendment.