

JOHN SPIROS

State Representative • 86th Assembly District

Assembly Bill 53

May 16, 2017

Testimony from Rep. Spiros

Hello, and thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture for allowing me to have the opportunity to share my testimony with you today regarding Assembly Bill 53, which would impact potato farmers in our state.

Assembly Bill 53 addresses the time period in which DATCP can order the treatment of late blight of potatoes. Currently DATCP has the authority to order the abatements of pests that constitute a hazard to plant or animal life. Currently, however, they are limited to ordering that abatement within 10 days. In the case of late blight of potatoes, 10 days is enough time for an incredible amount of damage as the blight travels to neighboring farms. This bill would shorten the time period in Wisconsin to 24 hours for treatment and 72 hours for destruction.

Potato production is an important industry in the state. Wisconsin consistently ranks third in the country. The potato and vegetable industry currently provides about 35,000 jobs in Wisconsin and generates \$6.4 billion in gross state product. Potato production specifically covers about 65,000 Wisconsin acres.

Because of the important role that potato production plays in our state's economy, it is important that we give DATCP the flexibility and ability to respond more quickly to prevent the late blight from spreading.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to share testimony in support of this bill, and I welcome any questions.