

43. GOVERNMENTAL PROPERTY ACQUISITION AND OWNERSHIP

We support legislation:

1. Preventing any involuntary net loss of private property ownership in any state. All future forced acquisition or sanctioning of property by federal, state, or local government agencies except by universities for agricultural research must be balanced by disbursement or sales of property of equivalent value from government inventories within the state.
2. To prohibit additional purchases of real estate for recreational or preservation purposes by any level of government unless the property remains on local tax rolls at the prevailing tax rates and prevailing assessed value of similar local properties.
3. Providing for a method of compensating units of local government by the state or federal government where the amount of land taken by the state or federal government severely reduces property tax revenues or where the demand for local services related to the state or federal-owned or managed property is substantially increased.
4. Requiring governmental units maintaining highways, parks or other areas which increase road use or require added police or fire protection or other emergency services to compensate the appropriate local bodies maintaining those roads or providing such services.
5. Providing for a hearing and a referendum of registered voters in the county or counties in which land is sought by a local governmental unit for recreational, forest or conservation purposes. Existing public lands should be developed for the purpose for which it was purchased before additional property is acquired.
6. Providing that agricultural land owned by local governmental units may be rented for agricultural purposes until developed.
7. To ensure that those government-owned lands, which are commercially farmed and produce a cash crop, should not be farmed by government, but instead are leased to farmers with the exception of those used for agricultural research.
8. Requiring the governmental unit to offer land for resale to the previous owner or their heirs at the lower of the original purchase price or current market value if the property acquired by an agency will not be used for the original purpose for which it was acquired or to adjacent landowners if the original landowner or their heirs do not exercise the right to purchase. If the original or adjacent landowner does not exercise the right to purchase within one year of the offer to sell, then the governmental unit should be allowed to sell such property to other interested parties. We support a sunset time limit of ten years for the property to be used as intended or the buy-back provisions go into effect.
9. Providing that on land owned by the State or local taxing authority where benefits from barter or income are received from such land, a portion of this income or exchange will be returned to the county in which the land is located in lieu of taxes.
10. Requiring units of government acquiring railroad right-of-way property (i.e. for trails) to follow the same provisions for fencing and farm crossings as the railroad was required to follow.
11. Requiring public bodies making acquisition of property for public purposes to make financial settlement within 60 days of the date that the purchase price is determined or be required to pay the property owner the prime interest rate plus 2 percent interest per year on the purchase price until final settlement is made.
12. To limit state and federal agencies in their purchase of additional recreational or wildlife habitat until existing sites, other than farmland, are developed and maintained for the purpose for which they were intended.
13. That would require governmental agencies to document the impact on agriculture of any infrastructure projects, show whether that impact is justified, and if so take all reasonable steps to reduce or eliminate any negative impact.
14. That clearly defines scenic easements, establishes parameters on the use of such easements, and restricts the ability of the government to use federal highway funds to purchase scenic easements.

We oppose:

1. Any effort to establish buffer areas around parks, preserves, or other areas being protected for their environmental or ecological value without just compensation to affected landowners.

2. The formation of any state or federal wildlife refuges, recreational or conservation areas until such time as the boundaries of such projects are clearly defined and the property targeted for acquisition is clearly identified.
3. The creation or expansion of local, state, and federal refuges, recreational or conservation areas when the aggregate acreage of such proposed focus areas account for more than two percent of the county's farmland.
4. The formation of state or national wildlife refuges, recreation, or conservation areas that impede the existing natural and artificial drainage systems of landowners in the watershed.
5. The continued encroachment of federal and state agencies and local governments on agricultural and forest lands.
6. The closing of Illinois State parks and state historic sites since they are valuable assets for the social and economic survival of rural Illinois.

We will work with state and federal agencies to allow the farming of lands acquired under the Open Lands Trust or other federal or state grant programs. Applications for Open Lands Trust funds to be used for wetlands or riparian areas must include a mosquito abatement and management plan. The timetable for development of the land acquired through such grant programs shall be established by the unit of local government, but is not to exceed ten years.

We encourage public universities to utilize more equitable and risk-sharing adjustable rate leases rather than a competitive bidding cash rent lease process on university-owned farmland. All lessees of Illinois farmland controlled by public Illinois universities shall be Illinois based farmers.

When evaluating farm lease policies on farmland owned by the University of Illinois and other public universities, the long term land stewardship commitments, the full potential local effects on rural communities and their economies, and future university relations with possible land donors should be considered in addition to the immediate economic benefits for the universities.

When determining farmland lease policies, the public institutions should consider taking the opportunity to use best management practices on the universities' owned farmland consistent with the information being provided through the University of Illinois Extension Service.