



## REPUBLICAN LEADER GLENN 'GT' THOMPSON

### **NO EMITS Act**

*Naturally Offsetting Emissions by Managing and Implementing Tillage Strategies*

**Sponsored by Rodney Davis (IL-13)**

**SUMMARY:** The legislation provides incentives for producers to adopt soil health cropping systems in order to increase farm productivity and optimize agriculture's ability to sequester carbon and reduce net emissions.

**BACKGROUND:** U.S. farmers have long recognized the benefits of managing soil health and many have voluntarily adopted practices to do so. For decades, they have proactively and voluntarily planted more cover crops, implemented diverse crop rotations, and used more conservation tillage methods.

We all agree soil health is an important piece of the puzzle for sequestering carbon and storing it in the soil. Soil health also has other critical benefits including improved water quality, erosion prevention, and flood prevention. Since 2012, sustainable soil use and resource conservation efforts increased by 34 million acres, or 17 percent.

Carbon sequestration in soil increases the amount of organic matter. Higher soil organic matter, which is about 60 percent carbon, means healthier soils that produce higher yields. Carbon-rich soils also support a larger population of soil microorganisms, which in turn, support many processes beneficial to plant growth, such as water retention, soil resilience, and pathogen resistance.

Continuing to build on the conservation success of American farmers will reap additional emissions benefits and increase U.S. farming's competitive advantage globally.

## **SPECIFICALLY, THE NO EMITS ACT...**

- Establishes a Soil Health Transition Incentive Program that provides payments and technical assistance to producers who are transitioning their farms to soil health cropping systems.
- Provides longer term contracts (5-7 years) to help mitigate risk during transition to soil health cropping systems.
- Allows the producer to choose individualized technical assistance through USDA, TSPs, commercial entities, non-profits, or state or local governments.
- Doubles funding for the Conservation Innovation Trials from \$25,000,000 to \$50,000,000.
- Establishes a State Assistance for Soil Health Programs and provides \$100,000,000 a year out of Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) funding for matching grants to States or tribes for state soil health programs.
- Carves out 1 percent of the overall conservation title funding to provide technical assistance to producers to mitigate and adapt to the changing climate.

# **NO EMITS Act: Naturally Offsetting Emissions by Managing and Implementing Tillage Strategies**

Short Summary: Creates a Soil Health Transition Program, expands activities of and increases funding for the On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials, establishes a grant program for States and Indian Tribes addressing soil health on agricultural lands, and establishes a special technical assistance initiative for climate change. This bill bolsters the agriculture industry's ability to sequester carbon and reduce net emissions.

## Section by Section

### **Section 1. Short Title**

The Naturally Offsetting Emissions by Managing and Implementing Tillage Strategies Act of 2021, or "NO EMITS Act."

### **Section 2. Soil Health Transition Incentive Program**

Section 2 amends section 1240B of the Food Security Act of 1985 to create a Soil Health Transition Incentive Program that assists producers in transitioning to soil health cropping systems. The program authorizes the Secretary to enter into contracts with producers in order to provide incentives to adopt such cropping systems as well as technical assistance for transitions.

Under the new program, the Secretary shall take into consideration the level of the soil health practice, the cost of its adoption/completion, and income forgone by the producer when determining the level of assistance under the program. The term of the contracts under the program are to be 5 to 7 years.

The new program created under section 2 further requires the Secretary to provide individualized and multi-year technical assistance for soil health cropping systems. Such technical assistance can be provided through the Secretary, a third-party provider, commercial entity (farm cooperative or ag retailer), an agronomy non-profit, or a state or local government (including a conservation district).

### **Section 3. On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials**

Section 3 amends the On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials established under section 1240H of the Food Security Act of 1985 by adding practices related to livestock production as a covered activity for the trials. The section further increases funding for the Conservation Innovation Trials from \$25 million to \$50 million for each fiscal year.

### **Section 4. State Assistance for Soil Health**

Section 4 amends the Food Security Act of 1985 by establishing a new grant program for States and Indian Tribes under the existing Conservation Stewardship Program. The purposes of the grants are to improve soil health on agricultural lands.

Subsection (c) of the new program establishes an application process for interested States and Indian Tribes. As part of the application process, Indian Tribes have the option to apply on its own or to be incorporated into a State's application. Subsection (d) of the new program requires the Secretary to give priority to entities with a climate action plan that includes soil health.

Subsection (e) of the new program caps the amount of the grants at the lower of \$5 million; or 50% of the cost of state implementation; or 75% of the cost of Tribal implementation. The subsection further defines the length

of the grants at one year but can be renewed annually.

Subsection (f) of the new program requires States or Indian Tribes receiving grants to submit to the Secretary the results of an audit for each year such State or Indian Tribes receives grant money and also requires a review and evaluation of the State or Tribal soil health program.

Subsection (g) of the new program give the Secretary authority to disqualify a State or Indian Tribe from receiving future grants if the Secretary finds that an entity has failed to comply with the terms of the grant.

Subsection (h) of the new program provides \$100,000,000 of the mandatory money for the Conservation Stewardship Program to be used for these grants. Subsection (i) provides that USDA cannot use more than 3% of the funds made available for administrative costs and a State or Indian Tribe cannot use more than 7% for such costs.

## **Section 5. Technical Assistance**

Section 5 establishes a special technical assistance initiative during fiscal years 2022 through 2026 to provide technical assistance to producers for addressing climate change. The section provides that not less than one percent of funds made available out of the Commodity Credit Corporation funds for the Conservation Title under the Food Security Act of 1985 shall be used to fund such technical assistance.

