



Delaware House of Representatives House Majority Caucus

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REP. WALKER PUSHING TO RESTORE FARMLAND **PRESERVATION FUNDING**

*No funding set aside in proposed FY 2012 budget; farms looking
to preservation over development*

PORT PENN – With hundreds of acres of fertile farmland facing the possibility of being developed into hundreds of homes along Port Penn Road, Middletown Rep. Rebecca Walker is pushing to have the state’s Aglands Preservation Fund replenished in this upcoming budget.

Due to Delaware’s budget crisis, the state cut funding to its farmland preservation fund from \$5.5 million in fiscal 2009, to \$2.5 million in fiscal 2010, and \$5.5 million for fiscal 2011. The proposed fiscal 2012 budget calls for no funding for the farmland preservation fund. Rep. Walker recently met with Secretary of Agriculture Ed Kee, Secretary of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Collin O’Mara and Delaware Farm Bureau president Gary Warren at Mr. Warren’s 135-acre farm on Port Penn Road to discuss the issue.

“Preserving farmland is critical for two reasons: it helps preserve a way of life in Delaware, and it prevents overdevelopment, which is something southern New Castle County knows a lot about,” said Rep. Walker, D-Middletown. “Several of these farms along Port Penn Road are feeling the development pressure, but they would like to be preserved. Too much development puts a strain on our schools, roads, sewer and other infrastructure.”

Rep. Walker said she is working with Mr. Kee, Mr. Warren and others to have funding restored to the Aglands Preservation program in the fiscal 2012 budget so the state can continue permanently preserving farmland, saving it from development. To date, Delaware’s Agriculture Lands Preservation program has permanently preserved 639 farms totaling 100,115 acres.

“Agriculture is still Delaware’s largest industry, with 41 percent of the state’s landmass in agriculture,” Mr. Kee said. “This stretch of farmland is among the most fertile farmland in the state and the entire East Coast.”

Mr. Warren bought his 135-acre farm in 1979 and currently grows soybeans, corn, wheat, Timothy hay and straw. He has wanted to get the farm into the state's farmland preservation program for several years.

“For several farms in this area, the preservation program is a last-ditch effort to avoid giving in to the development pressure,” Mr. Warren said. “In no way are we anti-development. We just want to maintain the strong farming community while focusing development infrastructure exists. Restoring funding to the program will help that.”

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