



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: February 6, 2018
RE: **Testimony on 2017 Assembly Bill 827**
TO: The Assembly Committee on Agriculture
FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on behalf of Assembly Bill (AB) 827. As many of you may know, agricultural production is one of the most hazardous industries in the country. Machinery is one of the leading causes of accidents in farming, including tractor rollovers. The National Tractor Safety Coalition says each year nearly 100 farmers die from tractor overturns.

That's the bad news. The good news is most of these rollover fatalities can be averted. That's where Wisconsin's ROPS Rebate Program comes in. This program offers rebates to retrofit older tractors that do not have an operator compartment structure to protect operators from injury due to rollovers or overturns. The National Farm Medicine Center (NFMC) started the ROPS Rebate Program in 2012 with seed money raised from a farm safety fundraiser in Marshfield. The NFMC ROPS Rebate Program has 3 components: 1) social marketing to persuade farmers to retrofit their tractors, 2.) hotline and website assistance for farmers on ROPS availability and pricing, and 3) rebates up to 70% of the cost of retrofitting up to a maximum cost of \$865.

AB 827 would require DATCP to make a grant to an organization that uses those funds to reimburse the cost of retrofitting a tractor. The organization receiving the funds must spend at least 70% of the grant funds to reimburse the retrofitting costs. The bill also requires the organization to report annually to DATCP on its expenditures of grant funds.

In closing, AB 827 would help to make safe the more than 100,000 tractors in Wisconsin that still need ROPS. Join me in supporting this bill and attempting to make farming safer for young, start-up farmers, older farmers, and small scale farmers across the state. I ask that you support this important piece of legislation.

BOB KULP

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 69TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

To: The Assembly Committee on Agriculture
From: Rep. Bob Kulp
Re: AB 827

Date: February 6, 2018

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for hearing this bill today.

Last September, a Marathon County farmer was killed when his tractor overturned, pinning him underneath it. By the time emergency personnel arrived it was too late, and he was pronounced dead at the scene.

These accidents are too common. According to the latest research available, five Wisconsin citizens and nearly 100 Americans die each year due to similar accidents. These are all the more tragic because they would be so easily prevented by fitting the tractor with a rollbar. Unfortunately, at least half of Wisconsin's estimated 200,000 tractors were manufactured before manufacturers began installing safety equipment like rollbars, and have not been retrofitted.

Since 2012, the National Farm Medicine Center in Marshfield has been offering rebates to farmers for retrofitting their tractors with rollbars. Since then, they have retrofitted 168 tractors.

But thus far the program has run on donations, which are simply not reliable enough to ensure a steady ability to market and run the program. Other states, particularly New York and Minnesota, have similar programs that rely wholly or in part on state funding. We are introducing this bill today to appropriate \$250,000 annually for retrofitting tractors with lifesaving rollbars.

The bill before you will authorize DATCP to issue \$250,000 in grants to farm safety organizations like the National Farm Medicine Center, who can then use that money to reimburse farmers for part of the cost of retrofitting their tractors with rollbars. We hope this will result in more tractors retrofitted, and safer environments for our farmers.

Thank you for your attention to this bill, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S 69TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

EDITOR'S PICK

Tractor rollover death brings attention to rollbar program

DAVID WAHLBERG dwahlberg@madison.com, 608-252-6125

May 29, 2016



Amber and Ronald Zank, of Neillsville, got a rollbar put on their tractor in 2013 through a rebate program run by the National Farm Medicine Center at Marshfield Clinic. Rollbars can prevent injuries if tractors overturn.

Zank family photo

Mark Wright was using a tractor to haul wood on his hilly property south of Mount Horeb this month when the tractor rolled over and crushed him to death.

The 1950s tractor, like about half of the 200,000 tractors on farms in Wisconsin, didn't have a rollbar, which can greatly reduce the risk of injury or death when tractors overturn.

"A rollbar could have been a very important prevention piece," said Barbara Marlenga, of the National Farm Medicine Center at Marshfield Clinic.

In 2013, the center started offering up to \$865 to farmers in Wisconsin who add rollbars to their tractors. The device typically costs about \$1,200.

The rollover protective structure rebate program, funded by about \$60,000 a year in donations, has helped pay for 144 retrofits, mostly in the central part of the state, Marlenga said.

Marlenga said \$200,000 in state funding would allow the program to expand statewide, an idea state Rep. Bob Kulp, R-Stratford, said he hopes to bring up in the next legislative session.

Five other states — Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania and Vermont — have similar programs, and Minnesota is considering one. Two receive state money: New York gets \$250,000 a year, the same amount Minnesota lawmakers are seeking, and Massachusetts gets \$25,000.

At least 47 farmers in Wisconsin died from tractor rollovers from 2001 to 2010, said Cheryl Skjolaas, agriculture safety specialist with UW Extension. More recent data aren't available.

Nationally each year, tractor rollovers kill an estimated 96 farmers, making rollovers the leading cause of accidental death on farms, researchers reported in 2010 in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*.

Manufacturers have equipped tractors with rollbars or cabs since 1985, but many tractors made before then don't have them, Marlenga said. A lot of farmers, especially those with small farms, use older tractors because they are cheaper, she said.

Rollbars, combined with seat belts, can almost always prevent operators from being crushed if tractors overturn, she said.

"If we can get them to put these rollover protective structures on, we can eliminate these deaths and injuries and keep our farmers farming," Marlenga said.

Wright, 54, wouldn't have qualified for a rebate because he wasn't a farmer. But his tractor, a Ford built in the 1950s, could have been retrofitted with a rollbar.

On May 7, he was cutting and hauling wood on his land near Daleyville when his adult son went to check on him, according to a Dane County Sheriff's Office report.

The son found the tractor tipped over on top of his father. The Dane County Medical Examiner said Wright died from injuries sustained from the rollover.

Wright, a heavy equipment operator at Edgerton Contractors, had taken other precautions. He was wearing ear plugs, gloves, long pants and work boots, said Lt. R.J. Lurquin of the sheriff's office.

Tony Schumacher, a dairy farmer from Rubicon, northwest of Milwaukee, had a rollbar put on his late 1970s tractor three years ago. He paid about \$300 after getting a rebate through the Marshfield program.

"It's cheap money if it saves your life," Schumacher said. "Anybody who has a chance to take part in it should."

Kulp, whose legislative district includes Marshfield, said he was nearly killed as a child when he fell off a tractor on his family's farm in northern Indiana.

His district has many small farms with old tractors that likely will be used for another generation, he said. Though the state budget has many competing demands, he said he will seek state funding next year for the rollbar rebate program.

"There's no question about it, it makes tractors safer," Kulp said.

http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/health-med-fit/tractor-rollover-death-brings-attention-to-rollbar-program/article_c4d94429-2f82-506b-9d1e-91012da0f1c9.html

Police: 1 dead in tractor rollover

Published on September 25, 2017 in Sirens

VILLAGE OF MAINE — A man is dead after being pinned underneath an overturned farm tractor, according to the Marathon County Sheriff's Department.

Emergency responders were called just after 9 p.m. Sunday to a property on Naugart Drive, just west of N. 60th Ave., in the town of Maine to a report of a man trapped underneath a farm tractor. Investigators say the tractor overturned after entering the north ditch. The driver was ejected from the tractor and pinned beneath the rear wheel, police said.

The man died at the scene. His name is being withheld for at least 24 hours to allow for notification of family members.

<https://wausapilotandreview.com/2017/09/25/police-1-dead-in-tractor-rollover/>



Testimony in Support of State Funding for a ROPS Rebate Program

Barbara Marlenga, PhD

February 6, 2018

Good morning. My name is Barbara Marlenga. I direct the Wisconsin ROPS Rebate Program out of the National Farm Medicine Center at Marshfield Clinic. The National Farm Medicine Center, established in 1981, is among the longest standing agricultural health and safety programs in the U.S.

Tractors are the leading cause of death on farms, most frequently due to side and rear overturns. For every rollover death, there are five non-fatal injuries, some of which result in permanent disabilities. The highest rate of these rollover deaths occur in the Midwest and Northeast U.S. It is estimated that within 2 years of a tractor rollover death, 70% of those farms will go out of business. Thus, there is a high personal and economic cost to tractor rollover deaths.

A rollover protection structure or ROPS refers to an operator compartment usually a cab or frame intended to protect farmers from fatal injuries caused by a rollover. A ROPS, when used with a seatbelt is 99% effective in preventing injury or death in the event of a rollover. Unfortunately, more than half of the estimated 220,000 tractors in Wisconsin do not have a ROPS, which did not become standard on tractors until 1985. We believe the farmers most in need of ROPS for their tractors are young and beginning farmers, older farmers, and small scale farmers.

With the goal of reducing deaths and disabling injuries on Wisconsin farms, the National Farm Medicine Center launched the ROPS Rebate Program in October 2012 with seed money from the Auction of Champions, an annual farm safety fundraiser in Marshfield, Wisconsin. The ROPS Rebate Program has 3 components: 1) social marketing to motivate farmers to retrofit their tractors, 2) hotline and website assistance for farmers on ROPS availability and pricing, and 3) rebates of 70%, up to a maximum cost of \$865 on the cost of retrofitting (includes cost to purchase, ship, and install the ROPS).

This is the 6th year of our ROPS Rebate Program, all funded by generous community donations. We have installed over 200 ROPS on tractors mainly in Central and Western Wisconsin where our donor-base is located. Unfortunately, community donations are not a sustainable way to run our program, as donations fluctuate from year to year and donors are interested in donating to new causes and new programs. Unless we can find alternate sources of funding, this will be the last year we can offer the ROPS Rebate Program.



We are asking the Agriculture Committee for financial support to help us continue the ROPS Rebate Program, so more Wisconsin farmers can retrofit their tractors with life-saving rollbars. Jim Beaver, a Loyal Wisconsin farmer, when speaking of the importance of the ROPS Rebate Program said, "if you could save one farmer's life.....that would be worth quite a bit.....wouldn't it?"

Thank you for your time and attention.



Testimony in Support of State Funding for a ROPS Rebate Program

Melissa Ploeckelman

February 6, 2018

Good Morning. My name is Melissa Ploeckelman and I am the Outreach Specialist for the Wisconsin ROPS Rebate Program.

I was born on a farm in central Wisconsin where safety was a large part of our daily routine. However, prior to starting my job as the Outreach Specialist in June 2017, I had not thought about the importance of rollover protection structures (ROPS) on tractors, nor had I heard about the Wisconsin ROPS Rebate Program. However, after hearing about the program I have become very excited about sharing the message with everyone around our great state.

As an Outreach Specialist, I talk to a lot of farmers about the ROPS Rebate Program, and they like to tell stories. I would like to share two stories I heard at a conference recently that emphasize the effectiveness of ROPS and the great need for a ROPS Rebate Program in Wisconsin.

Mark recently bought a Kubota tractor that came with a ROPS and a seatbelt. He was mowing a ditch and hit an unexpected bump. He rolled the tractor 360 degrees and it landed back on the wheels. Mark did not think he would ever rollover a tractor. He knew how to drive a tractor and had been doing it well over 40 years. Mark had a few bruises but asked his buddies, can you imagine what would have happened if there hadn't been a rollbar, or if I had chosen not wear my seat belt? Turns out he drove away from the spot without ever needing to even get off the tractor. The ROPS saved his life. Without it, Mark would not be around to share his story with me.

The second story emphasizes the great need for a ROPS Rebate Program in Wisconsin. A husband and wife came up to a booth I was running to sign up for a ROPS on their tractor. The wife said that they would like to sign up for ROPS for 10 tractors. She said, "We didn't think about it before but after seeing the flyer about the ROPS Rebate Program, we would like to put ROPS on all the tractors on the farm." I explained we can only retrofit one tractor per year for a single farm. The wife said they would just have to install one ROPS a year for the next ten years and the husband proceeded to sign up for the ROPS Rebate Program to get a ROPS on his first of 10 tractors.

These stories are the reason I am here today asking you to help us continue to fund the ROPS Rebate Program. ROPS are effective in preventing injury and death as shown in



the first story and the family in the second story needs the program to stay around for the next 10 years so they can retrofit all of their tractors with life-saving ROPS.

At the beginning of this testimony, I told you I had never thought about the importance of ROPS on tractors, nor had I heard of the ROPS Rebate Program. After hearing these stories first hand, I returned from the conference, sat down with my dad and we enrolled the Ploeckelman's 1972 Massy Ferguson in the Wisconsin ROPS Rebate Program.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration of this program to help all of our Wisconsin Farm Families.



Testimony in Support of State Funding for a ROPS Rebate Program

Scott Heiberger

February 6, 2018

My name is Scott Heiberger. I am the communications manager at the National Farm Medicine Center.

I grew up working summers at my grandparents' crop and cattle farm. My first paying job was detassling corn for a seed company at \$1.65 an hour. When you are immersed in a farm community you quickly learn that everyone has a personal story – of an injury “close call,” or of someone who was not so lucky.

In my job at the Farm Center, I work with news media to tell the safety story. The media have been especially enthusiastic in promoting the ROPS rebate program. I think there are several reasons for this.

Members of the agricultural media identify closely with the farm communities they serve. Their readers and listeners are often their friends, and they want their friends to be safe. A rollbar, when used with a seatbelt, is 99 percent effective in preventing death in the event of a tractor rollover. As a public health intervention, you can't get much more effective than that.

The clarity of this safety message is another reason for strong media support. The message fits easily into a headline or a soundbite. The media are eager to share this simple solution to an age-old farming problem, complete with the financial incentive to make it happen.

In short, the Wisconsin ROPS Rebate Program is a feel-good story, easy to rally around. If the program continues, we're confident that we can count on the continued support of our media partners.