



HR0630

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, Soil is an essential natural resource, and
3 Illinois farmers and professionals play a critical role in
4 managing Illinois soil and water resources; and

5 WHEREAS, The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
6 of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines
7 soil health as the continued capacity of soil to function as a
8 vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and
9 humans; and

10 WHEREAS, The implementation of soil health principles
11 across the Illinois landscape is not new but has has only
12 recently been recognized as an urgent part of the need to
13 prevent soil degradation, return organic resources to the
14 soil, or composting, protect groundwater used for drinking
15 water, and combat climate change; the degradation of soil can
16 be rapid, while the formation and regeneration processes can
17 be very slow; and

18 WHEREAS, The protection of Illinois soils is essential to
19 long-term prosperity and sustainability of the soil and water
20 resources of our State, counties, and cities, and the six
21 basic principles of soil health necessary for that protection
22 are to:

1 (1) minimize soil disturbance and external inputs,
2 including reduced tillage and using compost as a beneficial
3 product to increase soil organic matter;

4 (2) maximize plant and microbial diversity;

5 (3) maintain the presence of living roots;

6 (4) keep the soil covered, including with cover crops
7 and crop residue, to armor the soil;

8 (5) integrate animals into land management, including
9 grazing animals, birds, beneficial insects, or keystone
10 species, such as earthworms; and

11 (6) incorporate the context of local conditions in
12 decision-making, including for example soil type, topography,
13 and time of year; and

14 WHEREAS, Soil health principles and the associated
15 voluntary practices of no-till, cover crops, nutrient
16 management plans, and longer crop rotations enhance the
17 ability of farmers to meet the non-point source pollution
18 goals for nitrate-nitrogen and phosphorus; it is essential to
19 reduce the amount of nutrients flowing off of farm fields and
20 into our watersheds; with these reduced nutrient losses from
21 agriculture lands, which are detailed in the Illinois Nutrient
22 Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRS), farmers will be able to meet
23 desired outcomes as outlined by the Mississippi River Basin
24 Hypoxia Task Force for the Gulf of Mexico; and

1 WHEREAS, Soil health principles provide for the reduction
2 of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere through the sequestration
3 of carbon within the upper reaches of the soil profile; this
4 carbon mitigation improves the organic matter content in the
5 soil and provides a stable biome for soil organisms, improves
6 nutrient transfer from soil to root, and increases water
7 infiltration and water-holding capacity; and

8 WHEREAS, Despite soil's importance to human health, the
9 environment, nutrition and food, feed, fiber, and fuel
10 production, there is little public awareness of the importance
11 of soil protection; and

12 WHEREAS, Illinois soils are some of the best in the world,
13 having the ability to sink carbon and reverse climate change,
14 grow nutritious food for Illinois communities, and keep
15 waterways clean; and

16 WHEREAS, It is imperative that the State of Illinois
17 actively raise awareness on the importance of soil health and
18 promote its stewardship to safeguard this resource for future
19 generations of Illinois citizens; therefore, be it

20 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
21 HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
22 we declare March 3 through March 9, 2024 as Illinois Soil

1 Health Week in the State of Illinois; and be it further

2 RESOLVED, That we encourage the celebration of Soil Health
3 Week and its related activities to increase the awareness of
4 Illinois farmers, eaters, and those involved in agribusiness
5 of the importance of the air and water quality environment for
6 all citizens of this State; and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
8 delivered to the Director of the Department of Agriculture,
9 the Office of the Governor, the Chair of the Illinois Senate
10 Agriculture Committee, and the Chair of the Illinois House
11 Agriculture & Conservation Committee.