

# HOUSE BILL No. 1521

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## DIGEST OF INTRODUCED BILL

**Citations Affected:** IC 15-11-16; IC 15-12-5-6.

**Synopsis:** Agricultural conservation easements. Requires the Indiana state department of agriculture (department) to establish a program to assist individuals in creating agricultural conservation easements for agricultural land. Requires the department to assist individuals and local governments in obtaining agricultural conservation easements through federal programs. Creates the agricultural conservation easement fund to purchase permanent agricultural conservation easements. Provides that an agricultural conservation easement that meets the conservation easement requirements shall be assessed and taxed on a basis that reflects the easement. Provides that the state or a unit of local government may not acquire an interest in any real property through eminent domain if the real property is subject to an agricultural conservation easement, unless permission has been granted by the director of the department. Specifies that an agricultural conservation easement does not affect the ability of a public utility or a municipally owned utility to acquire property or property rights to be used in connection with the provision of utility services to the public.

**Effective:** July 1, 2021.

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January 14, 2021, read first time and referred to Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.

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First Regular Session of the 122nd General Assembly (2021)

PRINTING CODE. Amendments: Whenever an existing statute (or a section of the Indiana Constitution) is being amended, the text of the existing provision will appear in this style type, additions will appear in **this style type**, and deletions will appear in ~~this style type~~.

Additions: Whenever a new statutory provision is being enacted (or a new constitutional provision adopted), the text of the new provision will appear in **this style type**. Also, the word **NEW** will appear in that style type in the introductory clause of each SECTION that adds a new provision to the Indiana Code or the Indiana Constitution.

Conflict reconciliation: Text in a statute in *this style type* or ~~this style type~~ reconciles conflicts between statutes enacted by the 2020 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

## HOUSE BILL No. 1521

A BILL FOR AN ACT to amend the Indiana Code concerning agriculture and animals.

*Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Indiana:*

1 SECTION 1. IC 15-11-16 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA CODE  
2 AS A **NEW** CHAPTER TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE  
3 JULY 1, 2021]:

4 **Chapter 16. Agricultural Conservation Easements**  
5 **Sec. 1. As used in this chapter, "agricultural conservation**  
6 **easement" means a written conveyance, subject to permitted uses**  
7 **necessary for agricultural use, in which the owner:**

- 8 (1) **relinquishes to the public in perpetuity the owner's**  
9 **development rights; and**  
10 (2) **makes a restrictive covenant running with the real**  
11 **property not to undertake development.**

12 **Sec. 2. As used in this chapter, "agricultural use" has the**  
13 **meaning set forth in IC 36-7-4-616(b) and includes the production**  
14 **of livestock or livestock products, commercial aquaculture, equine**  
15 **or equine products, real property designated as a conservation**  
16 **reserve plan, pastureland, poultry or poultry products,**  
17 **horticultural or nursery stock, fruit, vegetables, forage, grains,**



1 timber, trees, bees and apiary products, other agricultural crops,  
 2 general farming operation purposes, or agricultural real property  
 3 that lays fallow.

4 Sec. 3. As used in this chapter, "fund" refers to the agricultural  
 5 conservation easement fund created by section 7 of this chapter.

6 Sec. 4. As used in this chapter, "unit of local government"  
 7 means a:

- 8 (1) county;
- 9 (2) city;
- 10 (3) town; or
- 11 (4) township;

12 located in Indiana.

13 Sec. 5. The department shall establish a program to assist  
 14 individuals and units of local government in creating agricultural  
 15 conservation easements for agricultural real property consistent  
 16 with the purposes of this chapter.

17 Sec. 6. The department shall assist individuals and units of local  
 18 government in obtaining agricultural conservation easements  
 19 through federal programs, including the Agricultural Conservation  
 20 Easement Program administered by the United States Department  
 21 of Agriculture's National Resources Conservation Service.

22 Sec. 7. (a) The agricultural conservation easement fund is  
 23 created to purchase permanent agricultural conservation  
 24 easements that comply with the requirements under section 8 of  
 25 this chapter. The fund shall be administered by the department.

26 (b) Expenses of administering the fund shall be paid from  
 27 money in the fund.

28 (c) The treasurer of state shall invest the money in the fund not  
 29 currently needed to meet the obligations of the fund in the same  
 30 manner as other public money may be invested. Interest that  
 31 accrues from these investments shall be deposited in the state  
 32 general fund.

33 (d) The fund consists of:

- 34 (1) appropriations made by the general assembly;
- 35 (2) gifts, donations, and grants; and
- 36 (3) federal grants and funds.

37 (e) Money in the fund at the end of a state fiscal year does not  
 38 revert to the state general fund.

39 (f) The department may not expend money in the fund to  
 40 acquire an interest in the real property through eminent domain.

41 Sec. 8. (a) The department may use money in the fund to  
 42 purchase permanent agricultural conservation easements if the



1 following requirements are met:

2 (1) The agricultural conservation easement is subject to the  
3 requirements and enforcement under IC 32-23-5.

4 (2) The real property must be for agricultural use.

5 (3) The real property is not less than five (5) contiguous acres.

6 (4) The department may not pay more than fifty percent  
7 (50%) of the fair market value of the agricultural  
8 conservation easement. However, the department may  
9 leverage matching dollars from federal sources, units of local  
10 government, or private sources.

11 (5) The holder of the agricultural conservation easement is:

12 (A) a governmental body that is empowered to hold an  
13 interest in real property under the laws of Indiana or the  
14 United States; or

15 (B) a charitable corporation, charitable association,  
16 nonprofit corporation, or charitable trust whose purposes  
17 or powers include assuring the availability of real property  
18 for agricultural or forest use.

19 (6) Any other requirements of the department.

20 (b) Before offering to purchase a permanent agricultural  
21 conservation easement, the department may request that the  
22 Indiana land resources council (IC 15-12-5) review the proposed  
23 agricultural conservation easement.

24 **Sec. 9.** For the purposes of IC 6-1.1, real property that is subject  
25 to an agricultural conservation easement that meets the  
26 requirements under IC 32-23-5 shall be assessed and taxed on a  
27 basis that reflects the easement.

28 **Sec. 10.** The department may adopt rules under IC 4-22-2 to  
29 administer this chapter.

30 **Sec. 11.** Notwithstanding IC 32-24 or any other law, the state or  
31 a unit of local government may not acquire an interest in any real  
32 property through eminent domain if the real property is subject to  
33 an agricultural conservation easement, unless permission has been  
34 granted by the director.

35 **Sec. 12.** Nothing in this chapter or in an agricultural  
36 conservation easement created under this chapter affects the  
37 ability of a public utility (as defined in IC 8-1-2-1(a)) or a  
38 municipally owned utility (as defined in IC 8-1-2-1(h)) to acquire  
39 property or property rights to be used in connection with the  
40 provision of utility services to the public.

41 SECTION 2. IC 15-12-5-6, AS ADDED BY P.L.2-2008, SECTION  
42 3, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY 1,



- 1 2021]: Sec. 6. The council may do the following:  
2 (1) Provide technical assistance and information about land use  
3 strategies.  
4 (2) Facilitate collaboration among commonly affected state,  
5 county, and local government units.  
6 (3) Compile and maintain a land planning information library,  
7 both hard copy and electronic, that includes current data on land  
8 resources in Indiana.  
9 (4) Establish or coordinate educational programs for  
10 governmental units, nongovernmental entities, and the public with  
11 special consideration for local planning commission members and  
12 county commissioners.  
13 (5) Provide counties and local communities conducting land use  
14 planning with access to technical and legal assistance through a  
15 referral service.  
16 (6) Provide information to local authorities on model ordinances  
17 for programs and techniques on land use.  
18 (7) Obtain grants and assist counties and local communities in  
19 locating additional funding sources for planning projects.  
20 (8) Make recommendations to the general assembly and other  
21 governmental bodies concerning land resources.  
22 (9) When requested, advise the general assembly on proposals  
23 relating to land resources.  
24 **(10) When requested, advise the Indiana state department of**  
25 **agriculture on proposals relating to agricultural conservation**  
26 **easements.**

