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1 SENATE JOINT 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 concept of soil health across the Illinois
11 landscape is not new but is only recently recognized as needed
12 to prevent soil degradation and combat climate change; the
13 degradation of soil can be rapid, while the formation and
14 regeneration processes can be very slow; and

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

20 (1) minimize soil disturbance and external inputs,
21 including reduced tillage;

22 (2) maximize plant and microbial diversity;

- 1 (3) maintain the presence of living roots;
- 2 (4) keep the soil covered, including with cover crops
3 and crop residue, to armor the soil;
- 4 (5) integrate animals into land management, including
5 grazing animals, birds, beneficial insects, or keystone
6 species, such as earthworms; and
- 7 (6) incorporate the context of local conditions in
8 decision-making, including for example soil type,
9 topography, and time of year; and be it further

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

21 WHEREAS, Soil health principles provide for the reduction
22 of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere through the sequestration
23 of carbon within the upper reaches of the soil profile; this
24 carbon mitigation improves the organic matter content in the

1 soil and provides a stable biome for soil organisms, improves
2 nutrient transfer from soil to root, and increases water
3 infiltration and water holding capacity; and

4 WHEREAS, Despite soil's importance to human health, the
5 environment, nutrition and food, feed, fiber, and fuel
6 production, there is little public awareness of the importance
7 of soil protection; and

8 WHEREAS, The State of Illinois should be actively raising
9 awareness of the importance of soil health and promoting its
10 stewardship to safeguard this resource for future generations
11 of Illinois citizens; therefore, be it

12 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL
13 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE HOUSE OF
14 REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING HEREIN, that we declare the first
15 full week of March 2022 as "Illinois Soil Health Week" and the
16 Wednesday of that week as "Illinois Soil Health Day"; and be it
17 further

18 RESOLVED, That these two celebrations and their related
19 activities will improve the awareness of Illinois farmers and
20 agri-business toward the importance of the air and water
21 quality environment for all of the citizens the State; and be
22 it further

1 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
2 presented to the Director of the Department of Agriculture,
3 the Office of the Governor, the Chair of the Illinois Senate
4 Agriculture Committee, and the Chair of the Illinois House
5 Agriculture & Conservation Committee.