



104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

HB5396

Introduced 2/10/2026, by Rep. Daniel Didech

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act

Creates the Healthy Soils Task Force Act. Establishes the Healthy Soils Task Force in the Department of Agriculture, with specified members. Provides timelines for initial appointments and the first meeting. Lists duties of the Task Force. Allows the Task Force to consult with specified agencies and entities. Requires the Task Force to submit a report on or before December 31, 2027. Dissolves the Task Force and repeals the Act on July 1, 2028. Makes findings. Defines terms.

LRB104 16581 BDA 29980 b

1 AN ACT concerning State government.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the
5 Healthy Soils Task Force Act.

6 Section 5. Findings.

7 (a) The General Assembly finds that healthy soils are a
8 limited natural resource and fundamental for healthy and
9 sustainable food production. Improving soil health means
10 increasing soil organic matter and diversifying soil's
11 microbial activity to enhance agricultural productivity and
12 environmental resilience.

13 (b) As Illinois is a leading agricultural state with
14 productive soils and abundant water supplies, a commitment to
15 healthy and productive soils and clean water is critical as
16 population and food production demands rise. However, the
17 State's soil has been depleted of organic matter and trace
18 minerals, making the soil less fertile, requiring more inputs,
19 and resulting in a degradation of the soil structure that
20 builds resilience and helps to maintain clean water.

21 (c) There is a real and pressing opportunity for the
22 State's farmers to capitalize on the economic and production
23 benefits of improved soil health, while simultaneously

1 improving surface and groundwater quality. Improving the
2 health of the State's soil is the most effective way for
3 agricultural producers to increase crop and forage
4 productivity and profitability while also protecting the
5 environment.

6 (d) The General Assembly finds that appropriate planning
7 and coordination is needed to accelerate and coordinate the
8 adoption of conservation practices that:

9 (1) rebuild and protect soil carbon to increase water
10 holding capacity and enhance the vitality of the
11 subsurface microbiome for landowners to capitalize on the
12 economic and production benefits of soil health;

13 (2) enhance water quality;

14 (3) capture carbon;

15 (4) build resilience to drought and pests;

16 (5) reduce greenhouse gas emissions;

17 (6) expand pollinator and other wildlife habitats; and

18 (7) protect fragile ecosystems for a more sustainable
19 future.

20 Section 10. Definitions. In this Act:

21 "Commodity crops" means large-scale agricultural products
22 grown for global trade and industrial use rather than direct
23 consumption. "Commodity crops" includes corn, soybeans, wheat,
24 rice, and other large-scale agricultural products grown for
25 global trade, animal feed, biofuels, or processed foods.

1 "Task Force" means the Healthy Soils Task Force created in
2 Section 15 of this Act.

3 Section 15. Healthy Soils Task Force.

4 (a) The Healthy Soils Task Force is created in the
5 Department of Agriculture for the purposes described in
6 Section 5 of this Act. The Task Force shall consist of the
7 Director of Agriculture or the Director's designee, who shall
8 be a voting member of the Task Force, and the following voting
9 members appointed by the Governor:

10 (1) 2 members who are representatives of soil and
11 water conservation districts;

12 (2) one member who is an academic expert in
13 agriculture and soil health from the Prairie Research
14 Institute at the University of Illinois;

15 (3) one member who is an academic expert in
16 agriculture and soil health from the Cooperative Extension
17 Service of the University of Illinois;

18 (4) one member who is an academic expert in
19 agriculture and soil health from the College of
20 Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences at the
21 University of Illinois;

22 (5) one member who is an academic expert in
23 agriculture and soil health from the Department of
24 Agriculture at Illinois State University;

25 (6) 3 members who are farmers who do not grow

1 commodity crops, including at least 2 farmers who are
2 using healthy soil practices;

3 (7) 2 members who are farmers who grow commodity
4 crops;

5 (8) one member who is a representative of an
6 Illinois-based environmental organization;

7 (9) 2 members who are representatives of national farm
8 or conservation organizations; each such representative
9 shall be from a different organization;

10 (10) one member who is a representative of a
11 sustainable agriculture organization; and

12 (11) 2 members who are representatives of Illinois
13 farm organizations.

14 (b) The Task Force shall consist of the following
15 nonvoting members:

16 (1) the Speaker of the House of Representatives or the
17 Speaker's designee;

18 (2) the President of the Senate or the President's
19 designee;

20 (3) the House Minority Leader or the House Minority
21 Leader's designee; and

22 (4) the Senate Minority Leader or the Senate Minority
23 Leader's designee.

24 (c) In selecting membership for appointment to the Task
25 Force, the Governor shall seek to appoint members with
26 expertise in methods for incorporating systems of healthy soil

1 stewardship into working agricultural operations and for
2 optimizing environmental services provided through such
3 practices. The Governor shall make appointments to the Task
4 Force not later than 60 days after the effective date of this
5 Act, and appointed members shall begin serving immediately.
6 Members shall be reimbursed for their actual and necessary
7 expenses incurred in carrying out their duties as members.

8 (d) The Director of Agriculture shall call the first
9 meeting of the Task Force not later than 90 days after the
10 effective date of this Act. At its first meeting, the members
11 shall elect a chairperson. After the initial meeting, the Task
12 Force shall meet as necessary at the call of the chairperson.

13 (e) The Department of Agriculture shall provide
14 administrative and other support to the Task Force. The Task
15 Force may request additional assistance from appropriate
16 federal and State agencies.

17 (f) The Task Force shall do all of the following:

18 (1) The Task Force shall develop a comprehensive
19 healthy soils initiative for the State.

20 (2) The Task Force shall develop a comprehensive
21 action plan to coordinate efforts to carry out the healthy
22 soils initiative using standards for organic matter,
23 biological activity, biological diversity, and soil
24 structure as measures to assess improved soil health. The
25 action plan shall establish goals, formulate timelines for
26 task completion, and determine resources required and

1 resource availability. In developing the action plan, the
2 Task Force shall examine (i) issues related to providing
3 farmers and ranchers with research, education, technical
4 assistance, and demonstration projects; (ii) options for
5 financial incentives to improve soil health; and (iii) the
6 contribution of livestock to soil health.

7 (3) The Task Force shall develop recommendations for
8 testing for chemicals, including dioxin, in the soil.

9 (4) The Task Force shall develop recommendations for
10 the use of plants for soil remediation.

11 (5) The Task Force shall identify realistic and
12 achievable goals and timelines for improvement of soil
13 health in the State through voluntary partnerships among
14 agricultural producers and relevant State and local
15 agencies and other public and private entities.

16 (6) The Task Force shall review provisions of relevant
17 federal law, including any implementing rules,
18 regulations, and guidelines of the United States
19 Department of Agriculture and identify opportunities to
20 leverage State, local, or private funds under the Regional
21 Conservation Partnership Program of the United States
22 Department of Agriculture and other conservation programs
23 for the purposes of the healthy soils initiative. The Task
24 Force shall include information obtained from the review
25 in the report issued under this Section.

26 (g) To carry out its duties, the Task Force may consult

1 with other agencies or organizations, including all of the
2 following:

3 (1) the Prairie Research Institute at the University
4 of Illinois; the Cooperative Extension Service of the
5 University of Illinois; the College of Agricultural,
6 Consumer and Environmental Sciences at the University of
7 Illinois; and the Department of Agriculture at Illinois
8 State University;

9 (2) the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the
10 Farm Service Agency, and the Agricultural Research Service
11 of the United States Department of Agriculture;

12 (3) the Soil Health Institute;

13 (4) the Soil Health Partnership or a successor or
14 similar program; and

15 (5) any other State or federal agencies or public or
16 private entities with responsibility or expertise in
17 research, demonstration, education, advising, funding, or
18 promotion relating to agronomic and other agricultural
19 land management practices consistent with the purposes of
20 the Task Force.

21 (h) On or before December 31, 2027, the Task Force shall
22 submit a report that shall include the comprehensive action
23 plan and the results of the Task Force's other duties under
24 subsection (f) of this Section, as well as the Task Force's
25 findings and recommendations, to the Governor and the General
26 Assembly, as provided in Section 3.1 of the General Assembly

1 Organization Act.

2 Section 20. Repeal. The Task Force is dissolved and this
3 Act is repealed on July 1, 2028.