



# NEWS

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**From the Illinois Senate**

***State Senator Dave Koehler***

**For immediate release**

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**Further information:**

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## **Illinois Senate Studies the Problem of Chemical Drift**

SPRINGFIELD, IL—Yesterday, a group of lawmakers gathered in Springfield to hear testimony on the issue of chemical drift, which occurs when agricultural chemicals applied to a farmer's fields drift onto neighboring properties.

“A number of my constituents have expressed concern that chemical drift threatens the livelihood of specialty farmers and may pose health risks for children and the infirm,” said State Sen. Dave Koehler (D-Peoria), who instigated the hearing. “I wanted a chance for the Senate Agriculture Committee to hear from individuals on both sides of this issue.”

Dozens attended the hearing, including conventional farmers, organic farmers, vintners, representatives from the chemical industry, and a number of experts from various state agencies and universities. Vintners and organic farmers explained how their crops can be ruined by chemical drift. Some pesticides that help corn and soybeans grow can kill grape plants and other specialty crops, and organic farmers can lose their certification if their crops are exposed to non-organic pesticides or fertilizers. Conventional farmers and members of the chemical industry conceded that there are some legitimate issues surrounding chemical drift. Both sides agreed that better communication is the key to preventing future problems.

“I was heartened to see some agreement at this initial meeting,” Koehler said. “I intend to work with my fellow legislators and the communities involved to find a mutually acceptable means of improving communication. Any acceptable solution will protect both Illinois' extremely productive conventional farmers and its burgeoning specialty farm industry.”

Sen. Michael Frerichs (D-Champaign), Chair of the Agriculture Committee, ended the hearing by forming a special Subcommittee on Fertilizers and Chemicals to study the issue further and propose well-planned legislation. Koehler, chair of the subcommittee, intends to call at least one more meeting before legislators return to Springfield in January.

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