**Petition supporting restored funding for Illinois SWCDs.**

**We are asking partners to share this petition with their networks. The goal is two fold. First, to demonstrate support for restoration of SWCD funding during veto session this fall. This request aligns with the petition approved by AISWCD Board members to restore the $4 million cut to SWCD operations in FY25.**

**Second, this petition will serve as an effort to gather names and contact information for supporters across the state who we can call on for the much more important work of establishing a new, stable baseline of funding in the FY26 budget. These details are to be determined.**

**Messaging can be adapted to individual organization audiences, but the ask should be the same: sign this petition to support an FY25 funding fix and be ready to support a more comprehensive FY26 effort.**

**Depending on platform (FastAction, Salsa, etc) individual digital letters will be sent to respective legislators, agency staff and administration officials as they are signed. In the lead up to veto session, these letters will be printed off by respective organizations, aggregated and presented together to relevant decision-makers.**

**Our hope is that partnering organizations will be willing to populate a shared database of motivated citizens, stakeholders and petition signers that can be engaged during the 2025 legislative session in support of the end goal: a new, stable baseline for SWCDs.**

Partner Landing Pages

**AISWCD:**

**ISA:**

**IEC:**

**ISA:**

**AFT:** [Preview - Dylan Cook - Salsa Labs](https://hq.salsalabs.org/#/activities/preview/51a9964f-cee3-4787-b014-42d4585cbe7a?pageTabId=1&pageType=FORM)

Communications:

**Partners will share respective messages and links to the landing page most relevant to their audience. This can be to highlight field days, about issue on-farm conservation, in support of statewide soil health and water quality goals and in any other media efforts pertaining to soil and water conservation in Illinois.**

* **AFT will share this petition in newsletters, on social media and through paid media on diverse channels highlighting the necessary partnership of SWCDs for our field programming, our efforts in support of the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy and other opportunities as they arise.**
* **Illinois Stewardship will:**
* **Illinois Environmental Council will:**
* **Illnois Soybean Assocication will:**

Sample Petition Language:

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| **AISWCD Board approved petition language:**  **Restore Soil and Water Conservation District Funding to FY 2024 Levels**  Illinois’ 97 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) experienced a substantial funding shortfall in the FY 2025 state budget. SWCD operations funding was reduced by $4 million from $8.5 million in FY 24 to $4.5 million in FY 25. The shortfall will lead to the loss of trained and qualified Soil and Water Conservation District employees which will take years of training to replace. Without sufficient funding, employees, much like unprotected soil, will erode away.  **AISWCD Board approved petition language:**  We the undersigned residents of Illinois’ 97 local Soil and Water Conservation Districts from across the State of Illinois do respectfully request FY 25 SWCD operations funding be returned to level funding based on FY 24 funded appropriations. |
| **American Farmland Trust petition language:**  **Restoring, Increasing and Stabilizing Support for Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts**  As a constituent and citizen of Illinois I am writing in support of Illinois’ Soil and Water Conservation districts. Our SWCDs are essential in protecting our natural resources, ensuring the health of our environment, and supporting our agricultural communities.  This couldn’t be more important than it is now. Climate change has already begun impacting the agricultural industry in Illinois and farmers need to prepare for a very different future.  Windstorms, extreme rainfall events and prolonged drought are increasingly stressing our natural resources – degrading our soil, accelerating nutrient losses into our waterways and intensifying dust storms.  SWCDs are the front line of solutions to these issues, but recent budget cuts have significantly reduced their ability to effectively carry out their mission and undermined the progress the Administration has made towards improving environmental outcomes in Illinois.  The General Assembly and the Pritzker administration have an opportunity to remedy this oversight in the state budget and provide stability for the 97 SWCDs in Illinois.  I encourage you to support SWCDs by:   1. **Immediate Restoration of Funding**: The operational funding for SWCDs must be restored during veto session to levels provided in FY24 to ensure the continuity of their vital services. 2. **Increase in Future Funding**: To address growing environmental challenges and to support the expansion of conservation efforts, we urge lawmakers and administration officials to support a $10 million increase beyond FY24 levels in the upcoming budget. 3. **Long-term Commitment**: We seek a long-term commitment from the state to provide stable and sufficient funding for SWCDs to plan and implement effective soil and water conservation strategies.   SWCDs play a pivotal role in safeguarding our soil health, water quality, and biodiversity. They provide critical support to farmers and landowners in implementing conservation practices. The work of SWCDs has a direct impact on the well-being of all Illinois residents and the legacy we leave for future generations.  Signed, |
| ISA: |
| IEC: |
| ISA: |
|  |

Sample Social Media Messaging:

**For partner organizations unfamiliar with the role of SWCDs:**

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| **SWCD role in Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy** |  | Nutrient loss impacts our water quality, affecting both aquatic ecosystems and human health. Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) are on the front lines, collaborating with farmers to implement practical, research-based solutions. Through initiatives like the Partners for Conservation Program, SWCDs provide cost-share opportunities for projects that don’t qualify for direct Farm Bill funds. Cover crops, for instance, play a crucial role in reducing nutrient runoff. Let’s protect our environment together! Sign the petition to support sustainable farming practices in Illinois! |
| **SWCD role in capturing federal IRA funds** |  | Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) play a pivotal role in accessing federal Inflation Reduction Act funds to bolster on-farm conservation efforts. Farmers want to do more, and they need strong SWCDs to help leverage federal IRA resources. Let’s champion conservation together. Support SWCDs and sign the petition for a greener future. |
| **SWCDs and FCSS** |  | The Illinois Fall Covers for Spring Savings Program is a game-changer. SWCDs actively promote cover crops as a win-win solution. These crops improve soil health, prevent erosion, and reduce nutrient runoff. By participating in this program, farmers invest in their own success while benefiting the environment. Be part of the change! Sign the petition for a resilient future! |
| **SWCDs promotion of on farm conservation practices.** |  | SWCDs are champions of on-farm conservation. They work closely with landowners, providing technical support and guidance. Practices like no-till farming and cover cropping enhance soil health, reduce erosion, and promote sustainable agriculture. By advising farmers on these methods, SWCDs contribute to long-term land preservation. Join us in protecting our soil! Sign the petition today and show your support for Illinois’ 97 SWCDs! |
| **SWCDs, soil health and clean water** |  | Our soil and water resources are invaluable. SWCDs play a pivotal role in safeguarding them. Through education and outreach, SWCDs help landowners interpret soil data, assess land use suitability, and adopt conservation practices. Their efforts contribute to healthier ecosystems, improved water quality, and resilient farmland.Sign the petition to support SWCDs and their mission |
| **SWCDs and technical assistance** |  | SWCDs roll up their sleeves to provide technical assistance to farms. Whether it’s controlling soil erosion, stabilizing stream banks, or implementing best practices, SWCDs are there. Their collaboration with agencies like the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service ensures that farmers receive solution-based support. By protecting our farmland, we secure our future. Join the movement! Sign the petition for sustainable agriculture. |