

Farmers should have autonomy to fix their own equipment

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Last month I joined Attorney General Keith Ellison and some of my colleagues to announce a suite of proposed bills to "unrig" our state's economy by fighting unfair corporate practices to improve the lives of working Minnesotans.

While recently we've seen corporate profits soar, many working families are still facing challenges to keep up and are feeling uncertain about their financial futures.

That includes farmers in our area and around the state, which is why I was proud to introduce my bipartisan bill to save farmers time and money by expanding Minnesota's fair repair laws to cover agricultural equipment.

In 2023, DFLers passed the Digital Fair Repair Act, which requires manufacturers of certain electronic products to make materials for diagnosis, repair and maintenance available to independent repair providers and individuals. The law, which will go into effect this July, means that phones, computers and other appliances can be repaired by an independent repair shop instead of only by the manufacturer.

Before this law, manufacturers could charge whatever they wanted for repair services since only they were authorized to fix our technologies when they broke. Fair Repair laws help bring down repair prices, support small businesses and encourage competition in the marketplace.

My bill, HF 4800, would extend the Fair Repair Act to agricultural equipment, saving farmers time and money. When farm equipment requires service, the electronic components need repairs just as often as heavy machinery, but under current law, those electronics cannot be fixed by the farmers themselves or by locally owned shops.

Combines and other equipment are often incredibly expensive and getting repairs directly from manufacturers can be costly and time-consuming. Farmers sometimes must wait for repairs from the manufacturer and that wait time may mean farmers miss their harvest window to turn a profit for that season. For those reasons, Farm Action estimates that a lack of federal right-to-repair legislation costs American farmers and ranchers as much as \$4.2 billion per year.

I am inspired by this nationwide movement from farmers and ranchers to have more autonomy to fix their own equipment. Without federal action, it is up to state legislatures to support our farming neighbors and independent repair shops. Minnesota farmers have enough to worry about without having to go exclusively to the manufacturers of their equipment for repairs every time something as small as a sensor malfunctions.

The fact is that fair repair bills are common sense, popular and bipartisan. According to a recent poll, 57% of consumers think that everyone should be empowered to repair their own electronic devices, and my bill has both DFL and Republican co-authors.

We should not let corporate greed get in the way of supporting our rural economy. Farmers are asking us to expand our Fair Repair laws to help them remain profitable as they support their families and our local economy, and that's why I will be advocating for HF 4800 in this legislative session.