

Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture  
**KENT A. LEONHARDT**



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**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE KENT LEONHARDT RELEASES STATEMENT IN  
OPPOSITION TO SB 270**

**Charleston, W.Va.** – West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt released the following statement in response to Senate Bill 270, which authorizes the Division of Natural Resources (DNR) to harvest trees within the West Virginia State Parks system.

“The Governor and Legislature should kill Senate Bill 270,” Leonhardt said. “The initiative set within the legislation is poorly thought-out with little foresight. There are better alternatives to fund the repairs our state parks desperately need. The payoff from harvesting timber within the parks will do more harm than good in the long run.”

Senate Bill 270 changes existing state code to allow the DNR in consultation with the Division of Forestry (DOF) to implement a plan to harvest trees within the West Virginia State Parks system. Authority and discretion to harvest lumber would fall under the directors of the DOF and DNR, as well as the park superintendent of the property being analyzed.

“A better alternative is to direct excess funds from increased harvests already being conducted in our state forests to improve the parks. The revenue from the harvesting plan already in place will far exceed the funds required to operate the DOF. The excess can easily be directed towards the parks system,” Leonhardt said.

Several conservation groups, as well as private citizens, have already expressed concerns with the plan set by SB 270. These groups have formed a coalition to push forth a campaign called “Save our State Parks” to combat the legislation.

“My biggest concern is this legislation will negatively affect park visitors and the tourism industry,” Leonhardt said. “Visitors to our parks deserve the opportunity to learn about old growth forests and the many non-game species that inhabit these areas. Additionally, the restrictions set within the bill are too

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narrow, lowering the potential harvest value that could come from SB 270. This further decreases any probable benefits to the state while putting the parks at risk.”

“We need to examine all alternative options and formulate a common-sense plan before stepping off this cliff,” Leonhardt said. “The West Virginia Department of Agriculture stands ready to assist the DNR in any way possible. We already have a great working relationship when it comes to managing forest health issues. This is too valuable of a natural resource not to take the proper time to develop a well, thought-out plan.”

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