

BARABOO NEWS REPUBLIC

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FARMERS STRUGGLING



CHARLIE RIEDEL, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Doug Bartek shovels soybeans in a bin on his farm near Wahoo, Neb., on April 6. Soybean farmers have faced increasingly tough times in recent years as costs for things such as equipment have risen over time while the price of soybeans has stayed low.

Midwest soybean growers squeezed by tariffs, Iran war

ERIC FERKENHOFF
Lee Enterprises
JOSH KELETY
Associated Press

WAHOO, Neb. — Strong winds whipped around Doug Bartek, a fifth-generation farmer, as he headed into a grain bin to shovel soybeans onto a conveyor chute. The 60-year-old was anxious at the onset of the spring planting season, rattling off the long list of issues affecting his family's livelihood at their 2,000-acre farm near Wahoo, Nebraska.

The high cost of fuel, equipment, and fertilizer — compounded by the Iran war

— and also tariffs, perceived “price gouging” by suppliers, and low soybean prices driven by a global supply glut. All of it weighs on Bartek, who is chairman of the Nebraska Soybean Association.

“Our biggest struggles are our inputs, be it fertilizer, seed, chemical, parts,” Bartek said. “There has been so much drastic markup in all of these. And I just kind of feel like the farmer’s kind of painted in the corner.”

Bartek’s concerns are shared by many Midwest soybean producers. Costs, such as equipment, have crept up over time while soybean prices have stayed low. Tariffs

levied by the Trump administration last year and the resulting monthslong trade war with China only made things worse, they say. Then the Iran war bottled up shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, restricting global fertilizer supplies and sending fertilizer prices sky high. A cease-fire deal announced April 7 raised hope that bottlenecks in the strait would abate, but the future of the agreement was uncertain.

“A lot of producers are pretty nervous going into this year,” said Justin Sherlock, a soybean farmer and president of the North

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America at 250 bears a distinctly Wisconsin fingerprint

KIMBERLY WETHAL AND MITCHELL SCHMIDT
Wisconsin State Journal

Wisconsin has long influenced national policies, ranging from its status as the first state to ratify the 19th amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote to the advent of the school choice program.

Here are some of the ways Wisconsin helped make our story America's story.

Birth of the Republican Party

Just six years after Wisconsin became a state, on a frigid March night in 1854,

America at 250: The story still unfolding

This story is part of an ongoing series exploring the 250th anniversary of the United States in 2026. Visit our website to read other stories in the series and share your own.

more than four dozen men — representing Free Soilers, anti-slavery groups and other fringe parties — gathered, debated

and negotiated in a small white schoolhouse in Ripon. When they emerged, they had formed the Republican Party based on a primary platform of opposing slavery.

At the time, the small community of Ripon was relatively new and home to about 200 people. Many of the town's new arrivals came from New York, bringing with them national concerns over women's rights, temperance and immigration. Primary among all of those issues was the matter of slavery.

Anger over how the Whigs, Free Soilers

and Democrats were handling the issue led those in Ripon to take the issue into their own hands.

Ripon's Little White School House, built in 1853, is commonly recognized as the birthplace of the Republican Party.

Progressive movement

As American cities experienced unprecedented growth and industrial advancement at the close of the 19th century, reformers,

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