



THE STOUFFER REPORT

Senator Bill Stouffer
Senate District 21

Capitol Building, Room 332
Jefferson City, MO 65101

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Attacks on Agriculture Stink

We've come a long way in production agriculture and our quality of life in rural Missouri. I often remind my grandkids, when they tag along for daily chores, that they are just two generations away from outhouses and horse-drawn plows. The good old days meant hard work, and I'm not sure they would want to go back.

This November, a proposition in Arizona prohibited confinement of hogs and cattle in certain ways. It passed with 62 percent of the vote. This vote outlawed a practice used for decades by farms of all sizes, tested by university researchers, and supported by the entire industry, including veterinarians. This decision will lead to a virtual upheaval of the entire pork industry in that state.

For those of us who raised hogs in mud or straw, we know that modern practices in agriculture are safer and more environmentally friendly than they were decades ago. Daily chores become frustrating when you don't have the tools to keep sows from inadvertently crushing and killing their offspring; it's hard to explain that to someone so removed from the farm.

According to Farm broadcaster Orion Samuelson, The Humane Society of the United States and Farm Sanctuary backed the initiative. These are the same groups that found similar success in Florida, warning their victories would "lead to similar reforms across the Nation."

Of course, few hog producers do business in Arizona, but these groups admit states are the low-hanging fruit for what's to come. The passage of this initiative in Arizona will spur similar efforts in ag-heavy states such as Missouri.

I'll never forget when the president of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, or PETA, said the following, "I openly hope that it [hoof-and-mouth disease] comes here. It will bring economic harm only for those who profit from giving people heart attacks and giving animals a concentration camp-like existence. It would be good for animals, good for human health and good for the environment."

These organizations will not stop with what is easily supported by those who don't understand agriculture. Their Web sites and terrorist-like supporters aren't just limited to confinement of livestock. They are working to end the use of biotech crops, crop dust from combines, and feedlots and hog operations right here in Rural Missouri.

It is important to note that farmers have a vested interest in the quality of life and well-being of their livestock. Not only is there a clear economic incentive to provide proper animal husbandry, it is also their calling to do so. Obviously, like every industry, there are bad actors. However, most farmers understand and know their way of life is dependant on being good stewards of their land and livestock.

Politicians, farmers and neighbors alike have a lot of work to do to find solutions to these problems, including educating a population more and more distant from agriculture and reducing challenges such as animal odor.

For Rural Missouri, agriculture pays the bills. We should all work to find solutions, not problems, for this industry and way of life.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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