Representative Art Staed Introduces Ground-breaking Legislation that Reforms the CAFO Industry

For too long the Iowa Legislature has failed to address the problems caused by the proliferation of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). The impacts of CAFOs relating to water quality, odor, airborne toxics, and quality of life for neighbors, has been well-documented. As the number of CAFOs increases dramatically, the problems have become unbearable. And county officials are frustrated at having no control over CAFOs because state legislation preempts county control. Members of the public demand legislative action.

To address this situation the Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club has drafted proposed legislation that significantly overhauls the laws regulating CAFOs. Representative Art Stead of Cedar Rapids has introduced the bill – HF521.

Pam Mackey Taylor, Director and Lobbyist for the Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club says, “This legislation is a game-changer. Rather than making minor adjustments to the law, this bill will make the changes needed to protect the public and the environment from the devastating impacts of CAFOs.”

The legislation:
- Prohibits the construction or expansion of a CAFO in an area with an impaired water, until the pollution has been removed from the waterbody
- Prohibits construction of a CAFO in an Outstanding Iowa Water, including Iowa’s renowned trout streams
- Prohibits construction in areas where karst formations are present. Karst formations are prone to siphon pollution into aquifers
- Requires notification of property owners within a 2-mile radius of a proposed CAFO
- Would close the loophole that allows a CAFO that keeps a small portion of the building unroofed to avoid more strict rules
• Provides for local control of siting, which means that the Board of Supervisors can use local zoning ordinances to determine appropriate locations for siting CAFOs within the county
• Eliminates the Matrix and replaces it with local control.

The current laws regulating CAFOs have been ineffective. This legislation would finally be the comprehensive change needed to address the problems caused by CAFOs.

The Matrix has failed in protecting Iowa’s water and air quality. Further the industry largely skirts using the Matrix by placing one less animal in a building than the threshold required to use the Matrix.

As Ms. Mackey Taylor says, “This legislation brings common-sense rules to the siting of concentrated animal feeding operations.”