

FFM Letter to Gazette re: HB 5127, 5128 and SB 654, 65

Following is the text of a letter printed in the Kalamazoo Gazette July 25, 2009:

To the Editors:

In the July 13 article, “***Farm-animal treatment could be on Michigan's 2010 ballot***,” Agriculture Committee Chairman Mike Simpson (D – Jackson) is quoted as saying proposed legislation – **H.B. 5128/S.B. 654 and H.B. 5127/S.B. 655** - is about “...*consumer confidence, protecting the food chain and safety of the food chain.*” Based on the facts outlined in the article, our organization believes otherwise.

Mr. Simpson’s proposed legislation would do the following:

- Prevent local governments from passing and enforcing more stringent consumer- and animal-protection requirements. This would invariably be geared to minimal compliance, and would thwart communities seeking a higher standard of food safety, ecological stewardship, and the humane treatment of animals;
- Audits would be exempt from the ***Freedom of Information Act***. This means the findings would be kept secret from the consumers Mr. Simpson allegedly seeks to protect;
- Certification of a farm deemed compliant would last indefinitely.

This legislation is really about maintaining and protecting the status quo among the 200+ industrial confinement “farms” in our state: legally sanctioned animal cruelty and pollution of our land and water. These facilities represent an increasingly fragile global industrial food system as evidenced by large-scale food contamination, rising food prices and diminishing natural resources such as fossil fuels and clean, fresh water.

Transparency is the key to food safety legislation and practices; trust is critical to our collective future. We urge consumers concerned about food safety to:

1. Source your family's food locally by shopping at Southwest Michigan's many thriving farmers' markets. Shake the hand that feeds you. Ask the vendors about their animal care practices, including the use of antibiotics and other medications.

2. Voice opposition to this legislation by contacting elected representatives on the House [<http://www.house.michigan.gov/committees.asp>] and Senate [<http://www.senate.michigan.gov>] Agriculture Committees.

We invite the community to join us in building a safe, economically and environmentally viable food system in Southwest Michigan. To learn more, please visit www.fairfoodmatters.org.

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On behalf of the staff
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