

Hog bill is bad for Alabama

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If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it probably is. If it smells like the feces of 10,000 hogs, it probably is a corporate owned and Alfa backed hog farm.

If Alfa and the corporate backers of Senate Bill 368 have their way, many residential property owners and soon to be former family farmers in the state of Alabama may be forced to welcome all those hogs.

Bill 368 is misleadingly called the "Family Farm Preservation Act." No preservation is involved, however, because this bill simply immunizes huge corporate hog farms from nuisance lawsuits.

Known in the industry as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), these big businesses are nasty operations. Immunity from lawsuits and protecting their money from regular Alabamians is the gold standard for rogue corporations that never want to be held accountable for their actions.

What does this mean to the average Alabama property owner? It means that if a CAFO moves into your area, infects it, and drops the value of your property by 50 percent, you have no rights against the hog farm for that devaluation. This bill also saves corporate hog farms from the inconvenience of cleaning up their own messes and mandates that Alabama taxpayers foot the bills for cleanups.

Everyone should know some things about hog feces. It does not evaporate into thin air. It does leak into the ground, contaminating the groundwater, streams, lakes, and rivers.

Alfa is in favor of you drinking, swimming in, or fishing in water contaminated by tons of hog feces. I doubt Alfa's CEO would want to do so. I'd be willing to guess that if he had a planned CAFO near his home, Alfa wouldn't back this hog farm bill.

Everyone recalls when Sen. Trent Lott's house suffered damage during Hurricane Katrina. Lott spent decades attacking trial lawyers and lawsuits, until he suddenly found himself with an insurance company that did not play fair. He brought a lawsuit. Senate Bill 368 would not only cause this stink, but also would allow these CAFOs to drive family farmers right out of business.

CAFOs are the Wal-marts of the agricultural world. When they arrive, they drive down the prices of hogs to the point that family hog farmers cannot compete and lose their farms. One would think that a bill so ironically titled the "Family Farm Preservation Act" would prevent this. Instead, it protects that practice. In many states where this has already happened, the wealthy corporations behind the CAFOs even buy the family farmer's land for pennies on the dollar. Everyone should contact our senators and tell them we are against the hog farm bill. You can find contact information at www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/zipsearch.html.

If Alfa cared about the small farmers as much as it did the corporate fat cats that own these cash-cow CAFOs, the family farms could be preserved. This bill, however, will make the small Alabama farmer an endangered species.

Alabama Family Farm Preservation Act? It sounds like a load of hog feces to me.

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