

Clean Air for Rural Iowa

The Iowa Environmental Council has launched a radio advertising campaign on air quality and livestock operations in Iowa. The ads are supportive of our agricultural economy and tradition, supportive of our Department of Natural Resources, and critical of our state legislature and federal government on this issue

A media teleconference was held Tuesday, September 14 at 10:00 a.m. to launch the campaign and give further information on the campaign.

Statements from the teleconference

STATEMENT OF RICHARD LEOPOLD

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IOWA ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

September 14, 2004

Good morning. My name is Rich Leopold and I am the Executive Director for the Iowa Environmental Council. The Council is an alliance of over 70 diverse organizations and over 500 individuals working to promote a safe, healthy environment and sustainable future for Iowa. We actively work through shaping public policy, research and public education, coalition building, and advocacy to give Iowans a voice on issues that affect their quality of life.

The Council has a long, successful history when it comes to water quality issues in Iowa. More recently, our focus has broadened to include air quality concerns, specifically the implementation of the air quality program included within the Iowa "Livestock Law" of 2002.

Following the joint University of Iowa and Iowa State University review study, titled "Iowa Concentrated Feeding Operations Air Quality Study", the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (the "DNR") developed recommended benchmark rules for hydrogen sulfide and ammonia. Although approved by the Environmental Protection Commission, the 2003 Iowa Legislature struck down these rules.

The 2004 Iowa Legislature introduced and passed a separate bill which the Council and many other organizations viewed as far too weak in protecting public health for rural residents. Subsequently, Governor Vilsack vetoed this bill.

The DNR has again attempted to set a benchmark for hydrogen sulfide. This rule has passed the Environmental Protection Commission and is up for approval within the legislative

Administrative Rules Committee this very afternoon. Even with the support from scientific experts within the DNR, the Iowa Department of Public Health, the University of Iowa, the Iowa Environmental Council and others, there is great concern this effort will again be struck down.

It is important to point out this regulation is not even enforceable at this point. It serves as merely a benchmark for the DNR to continue research. With the original law passing three years ago, we feel it is time for forward progress.

The Council supports the proposed DNR rule, even though we see this proposal as a compromise that may not adequately protect rural public health. But it is a start. Iowans have waited far too long for meaningful, protective air quality standards that are fairly applied to Iowa's livestock industry.

Most livestock operations are acting responsibly, but a few poorly managed facilities are giving the industry a black eye and it is time to hold these polluting producers accountable.

The Council also has great concern over EPA plans to cut a deal with the livestock industry that shields polluters from Clean Air Act and Superfund hazardous waste laws. This action is ill-advised, unnecessary, and not protective of rural Iowans public health or economy. We join with many other national and state organizations in opposition to this process, which has thus far been far too secretive, not allowing public comment and input.

With lack of protection at the federal level, the need for strong state regulations is more important than ever. Iowans need to be able to protect Iowans, and we have waited far too long in this state for meaningful air quality rules that will protect, not hurt, our valued livestock industry.

I urge all Iowans to talk to local state legislators, the EPA, and others to protect our rural health and move forward with enforceable air quality standards.

STATEMENT OF MICHELE MERKEL

SENIOR COUNSEL

ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY PROJECT

September 14, 2004

Good morning. My name is Michele Merkel and I am senior counsel for the Environmental Integrity Project or EIP. EIP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that was established in March of 2002 to advocate for more effective enforcement of environmental laws.

Why am I here today?

I want to make sure that Iowans know that the EPA will soon finalize a backroom deal with the livestock industry that will shield polluters from Clean Air Act and Superfund hazardous waste laws. All the EPA will get in exchange is limited information about air emissions – and this is a lousy deal, because the EPA already has the right and the authority to get that information. The agreement with the livestock industry was drafted without consulting those in Iowa and elsewhere who suffer from the pollution caused by large livestock operations, and with only minimal input from the scientific and environmental communities.

A wide range of concerned parties have told EPA that they object to this sweetheart deal because of the lack of public participation in the process to date, the sweeping nature of the liability shield, and the scientific flaws in the proposed monitoring program.

Recently, sources inside EPA have indicated that the agency now is finalizing the deal, possibly without seeking public comment -- a move that breaks a written promise made to Congress in October 2003.

EPA's deal with the livestock industry will put many communities at risk by stalling air pollution controls for almost a decade. The American Public Health Association and the National Academy of Sciences have stated that pollution from livestock operations jeopardizes public health in rural communities across the nation. EPA's unwillingness to exercise its authority to address this public health problem is a disservice to the American public.

And that brings us to today's news event.

Since EPA won't hold livestock operations accountable for their air emissions, Iowans' have to protect themselves. I encourage Iowans to contact IDNR and their legislators and tell them that they want protective and enforceable air regulations for livestock operations. They should also should contact EPA officials in Washington and tell them to use their existing authority to gather emissions data and to enforce clean air laws.

This is your environment – and your health – that the EPA is putting at risk. They need to know that you won't stand still for that.

Patrick T. O'Shaughnessy

Good morning, my name is Patrick O'Shaughnessy. I have a PhD in Environmental Engineering and am an Associate Professor in the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health at the University of Iowa. I have been with the department since 1997. I have expertise in the generation and measurement of aerosols and gases. I have performed a year-long study measuring ammonia and dust levels in a swine CAFO to determine the diurnal and seasonal changes in concentration levels of these pollutants. I also helped to write several chapters of the Joint University study on CAFOs and their affect on air quality. I am currently

involved in research that involves the use of air dispersion models to determine the range of transport of contaminants emanating from CAFOs, and am serving on a Technical Working Group established by the IDNR to evaluate air dispersion models in connection with good management practices and emission estimates of contaminants emanating from CAFOs.