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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Midwest Environmental Advocates, Sierra Club Warn that Anti-Environmental Rider
Would Strip Public's Right to Know About Toxic Chemical Pollution At Livestock
Factories**

U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee Expected to Act on Tuesday

Madison, WI - On Tuesday, September 21, the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee is likely to consider a rider to the VA-HUD-Independent Agencies appropriations bill that would exempt factory farms from requirements to report their toxic chemical releases to local, state and federal agencies. U.S. Senator Herb Kohl of Wisconsin is on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Giant livestock operations, confining thousands of animals, routinely emit large quantities of hazardous chemicals such as ammonia and hydrogen sulfide as animal waste decomposes.

"Pollution and odors from livestock factories harm quality of life for Wisconsin's rural communities," said Andrew Hanson, staff attorney with Midwest Environmental Advocates, Inc., a non profit environmental law center. He added, "Scientific studies from neighboring states show that air pollution from livestock factories can threaten people's health." In addition, as ammonia particles fall from the air and wash into streams, ammonia becomes a significant source of nitrogen pollution that can lead to weeds and algae blooms in lakes.

Maple Leaf Dairy, a 4,000 cow livestock factory near Lake Michigan in northeastern Wisconsin, may emit up to 158 lbs. per day of ammonia, or about 30 tons per year of the toxic pollutant, according to a scientific estimate. Neighbors of the operation, including members of a local conservation and sustainable agriculture group known as Centerville CARES, have suffered from the odors and air pollution associated with Maple Leaf Dairy's release of hazardous air pollutants, and on some summer days have stayed trapped in their homes to avoid the air pollution. If the proposed rider passes, people like those who live around Maple Leaf Dairy will lose their right to know what toxic air pollutants the livestock factory is emitting.

"Neighbors ought to be able to find out what pollutants their families are exposed to. Obstructing a citizen's right to know about these pollutants is a familiar attempt at creating an environmental

loophole in favor of industry,” Caryl Terrell, director of the John Muir Chapter of the Sierra Club said, referring to the Bush Administration’s environmental policies. "Congress should not use ‘must-pass agency funding bills’ to create a gaping loophole in the nation's chemical right-to-know laws,” Terrell added.

Although laws requiring public right-to-know for toxic chemical releases have existed since the 1980s, factory farms have generally not complied. In November 2003, a court decision in Kentucky held that Tyson Foods had failed to comply with chemical reporting laws. That decision, which is on appeal, has spurred livestock industry efforts to escape from chemical reporting requirements.

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FAST FACTS

- Midwest Environmental Advocates is a non-profit, public interest environmental law center that provides legal representation and community organizing assistance to groups that are working for clean air, clean water, and environmental justice. For more information visit www.midwestadvocates.org or call (608) 251-5047 ext. 0.
- The Sierra Club's members are more than 700,000 of your friends and neighbors. Inspired by nature, we work together to protect our communities and the planet. The Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization.
- The federal right-to-know laws, known as the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, require that companies that release up to 100 lbs. per day of any hazardous chemical, including ammonia, report that release to the local, state and federal governments. The purpose of those laws is to allow the government to take action to prevent or remedy threats to public health that may arise as a result of the hazardous chemical release.