January 30, 2014

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Chairman  
Judiciary Committee  
437 Russell Senate Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to thank you for your extraordinary efforts to preserve the public’s right to know about agricultural and livestock operations, and your continued commitment to protecting the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Thanks to your leadership, people who live near or share waterways with concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) in Vermont and across the United States will continue to have access to information that is critical for public health and safety.

Your dedication to the government transparency kept dangerous provisions that threatened the right to know from being included in the final version of the Farm Bill. As you well know, the House-proposed language would have undermined the FOIA’s balanced approach to releasing information that is in the public interest. The FOIA already includes strong protections for personal and private information. These protections rightly keep the personal information of individuals and small family operations from inappropriately being released. The House's proposed language set a dangerous precedent of extending the FOIA’s privacy protections to corporations.

We thank you, again, for your continued commitment to the protection of the public’s right to know and for your leadership in removing these damaging provisions from the Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

American Association of Law Libraries  
Brechner Center for Freedom of Information  
Center for Science and Democracy at the Union of Concerned Scientists  
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington  
Community Research

Defending Dissent Foundation  
National Coalition Against Censorship  
Northern California Association of Law Libraries  
OpenTheGovernment.org  
Project On Government Oversight
Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press

Public Citizen

Society of Professional Journalists

Tully Center for Free Speech at Syracuse University