

## **Farm Bill Threatens the Right to Know**

The House-passed version of the Farm Bill includes two provisions that undermine the Freedom of Information Act and cut off public access to information that could be necessary for protecting health and safety and understanding agricultural issues.

### **Section 11325**

- Requires the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to withhold basic location and contact information about agricultural and livestock operations.
- Cuts off access to information that the public, particularly people who live near or share waterways with concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) may need to protect their health and safety.
- The provision is unnecessary. Current law already includes strong personal privacy protections.
- The provision sets a dangerous precedent of extending FOIA's personal privacy protections to corporations.

### **Section 1613**

- Prohibits any federal agency from opting to disclose information submitted to the government "concerning an agricultural operation, farming or conservation practices or the land itself."
- Expands the current prohibition from the Department of Agriculture to all agencies currently subject to the FOIA.
- Eliminates agencies' ability to aggregate the data and report on it in ways that prevented the public from identifying individual farmers.
- If the information is required to be made available under another law, agencies would be required to notify Congress within 24 hours of releasing the information to a FOIA requester. This would make FOIA harder for agencies to implement, and add to already lengthy delays.
- According to the Sunshine in Government Initiative , the provision would inhibit:
  - Studies of farmland operations and impacts on public health;
  - Exchange of information between federal, state and local authorities;
  - Accurate land value assessments; and
  - Avoid waste of taxpayer dollars intended to subsidize struggling farmers