



*The mission of DRC is to promote sustainable use of natural resources, and family owned and operated agriculture, by building enduring, democratic local groups that empower people to influence decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities.*

## **Dakota Resource Council Applauds Citizen-Driven Effort to Bring North Dakota Corporate Farming Law Exemptions to Statewide Vote in 2016**

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BISMARCK, ND - Dakota Resource Council Board Chair Linda Weiss congratulated members of DRC and its allies for successfully completing a statewide petition drive to refer ND Senate Bill 2351 for the June 2016 ballot. Today, at the ND state capitol in Bismarck, DRC members joined members of North Dakota Farmers Union, The Catholic Conference, and the Independent Beef Association of North Dakota, as they turned in over 21,000 signatures to Secretary of State Al Jaeger, in advance of the petition deadline of midnight, Thursday, June 18th.

*“North Dakota was built by family-owned farms and ranches. Those farmers and ranchers, and their descendants, turned around and built towns and cities, small businesses, banks, and schools. No one knows how to maintain a strong community better than the farmer or rancher living there. Dakota Resource Council proudly supports family-owned and family-operated agriculture, because ND farmers and ND ranchers have a vital stake in the future and well-being of North Dakota and its vibrant rural communities. We want to give a big thank you to North Dakota Farmers Union and its members for stepping up to lead this fight for family agriculture.”* said Weiss, speaking from her home in Belfield, ND.

SB 2351, which allows for exemptions to North Dakota’s longstanding ban on corporate owned farms, for dairy and swine operations, was passed during the 2015 legislative session. The law change allows corporate-owned farms and non-family companies to buy, rent, or lease dairy farms and swine production facilities. The bill passed the ND Senate on February 20<sup>th</sup>, passed the ND House on March 16<sup>th</sup>, and the ND Senate concurred to the ND House version on March 19<sup>th</sup>. ND Governor Jack Dalrymple signed the bill on March 20<sup>th</sup> despite vocal opposition from producers and consumers from across the state, industries, and political spectrum.

DRC member Jeri Lynn Bakken who ranches in southwest ND near Lemmon, SD said, *“North Dakota’s anti-corporate farming law has been protecting family farms and ranches, and in turn rural North Dakota, since the 1930s. North Dakotans understand the importance of family-based agriculture and the role it plays in our economy. We cannot allow a growing urban based legislature to undermine North Dakota’s farming and ranching culture in exchange for corporate profit.”*

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## DRC APPLAUDS PETITION DRIVE

Nationally recognized agriculture expert, and DRC member, Fred Kirschenmann, had this to say about the corporate farming exemptions, *“In my career I have had to opportunity to directly observe the evolution of corporate owned farms in America. Such farms operate by a single principle: maximum, efficient production for short-term economic return. There are no incentives in this business model to attend to the health of the land or the community. That is not the path to a secure food and farming system. We have an ideal system of family farm agriculture right here in North Dakota. It is not a relic of the past; it is the agriculture of the future, where food safety, food security, and good stewardship are a way of life.”*

Those in opposition to the law changes held a “Rally for Family Farms” in Bismarck on the steps of the state capitol on March 27<sup>th</sup> and announced plans to start a petition drive to refer the law to the 2016 ballot. Organizers submitted petition paperwork to Secretary of State Al Jaeger that same day. Jaeger approved the petition on April 6<sup>th</sup> and forty-six members of Dakota Resource Council circulated petitions along with volunteers from North Dakota Farmers Union, The Catholic Conference and the Independent Beef Association of ND. The 13,452 minimum signatures needed were easily collected by DRC and its partners within the 90-day timeframe. DRC members alone collected over 1600 signatures. The Secretary of State’s Office will now review the signatures for placement on the June 14, 2016 ballot.

For more information on how to get involved in the referendum effort, contact Dakota Resource Council Agriculture and Food Organizer Tim Glaza at [tim@drcinfo.com](mailto:tim@drcinfo.com) or by calling DRC at (701) 224-8587.

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