

Declaration of Sonja Trom Eayrs

I, Sonja Trom Eayrs, being duly sworn, state as follows:

1. My great grandfather, Ed Trom, immigrated to the United States from Norway in 1892. Imagine the mixed emotions as he left his home in Hemsedal, Norway, and embarked upon a new continent with his two cousins. My great grandfather settled in Dodge County, while his two cousins settled in North Dakota. I have always felt a special kinship to the people of North Dakota.

2. I grew up on the family farm in Dodge County and help manage the Trom multi-generational farm today. I am also a practicing attorney in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I recently authored *Dodge County, Incorporated: Big Ag and the Undoing of Rural America* (University of Nebraska Press).

3. Today, I make this declaration in opposition to Senate Bill 2174 regarding setbacks.

4. During my youth, Dodge County was home to many sustainable family farms and a strong rural community. Our family farm was and continues to serve as an important part of this community, including as the site of many outdoor gatherings and celebrations. These events can no longer occur due to the overwhelming stench from neighboring hog factory farms.

5. Our beautiful farm is situated at the headwaters of the Cedar River, which flows south into Iowa and eventually into the Mississippi River.

Throughout my childhood, I learned to farm with nature, respect the environment, and appreciate the diverse wildlife in the area. Protecting air and water quality is a value my parents instilled in me from a young age.

6. The area began to change in the early 1990's, when industrial-scale hog factory farms began to move into the immediate area. In 1993, the first hog factory farm was built about a mile north of our farm, and many more have since been constructed in the area. There are now 12 hog factory farms within a three-mile radius of our farm, confining an estimated 30,000 pigs.

7. This influx of factory farms and their air pollution and industrial waste has severely harmed the environment and quality of life in our community. Hog factory farms produce dangerous air emissions, including methane, ammonia, hydrogen sulfide and other pollutants.

8. I cannot begin to capture the significant changes to my home community in the two to three minutes allotted for oral testimony. To provide you with a sense of the dangerous air emissions from area factory farms and the impact upon my family and other neighboring farm families, I encourage you to read the attached chapter 15, "The Three-Day Stink Out" from my book, *Dodge County, Incorporated: Big Ag and the Undoing of Rural America*.

9. As I describe in chapter 15, in November 2017, the neighboring hog factory farm operator was engaged in fall pump-out and spread an

estimated 2 million gallons of manure just yards from where my father was finishing fall harvest. As my father picked corn, dangerous air emissions infiltrated the combine cab, and my father had to step off the combine to vomit. He suffered for days thereafter, undoubtedly a victim of hydrogen sulfide poisoning.

10. As I note in chapter 15:

While hydrogen sulfide is the air pollutant most likely to cause emergency health situations, the fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) and one of PM 2.5's precursors, ammonia, cause the most mortality and morbidity among the livestock industry's prevalent toxins. Chronic exposure to fine particulate matter and ammonia can lead to lung diseases, heart diseases, and a number of other cancers. As mentioned in chapter 11, a groundbreaking 2022 report found that ammonia emissions contribute to 12,400 deaths annually in the United States, and animal agriculture is the leading cause of such emissions. The scientists concluded that changes in farming practices, most importantly in manure and fertilizer management, could reduce these deaths by half.

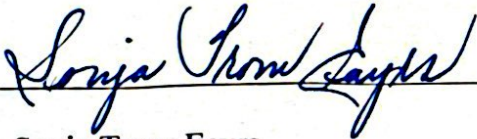
11. In addition to dangerous air emissions, factory farms produce incredible amounts of liquified waste, which contain pharmaceuticals, heavy metals, and pathogens in addition to the nitrogen and phosphorus used as a "fertilizer." Factory farms dispose of this waste on cropland in our area, leading to degradation of local waterways. Over-application of factory farm waste that cannot be utilized by crops is prone to running off into the fields when it rains or leaching into the groundwater that most of our rural community relies on for drinking water. Additionally, I have observed excessive application of manure on crop land, which I believe was done as a waste disposal effort rather than to provide nutrients for crops.

12. There is no magic setback number. Setbacks or no setbacks, dangerous emissions from factory farms will directly impact farmers and farm families. "Safe setbacks" do not exist, particularly in farm country where farmers and farm families live on the land and work the land, perhaps adjacent to a factory farm or near manure-spreading activities.

13. Industry giants have ruined my home county – don't allow industry giants to ruin beautiful North Dakota, too.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on March 6, 2025


Sonja Trom Eayrs