



Society of Environmental Journalists

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The Honorable Mark Begich
111 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
TRANSMITTED BY FAX: (202) 224-2354

June 19, 2012

Dear Senator Begich:

The Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) strongly supports your amendment to the Senate Farm Bill which would guarantee public disclosure of the recipients of federal crop or livestock insurance.

We thank you and Senator McCain for filing this amendment. SEJ believes that it would do a great service to the public's right to know, and consequently help keep both government and subsidy recipients accountable. We feel strongly that the best public policy is made in an atmosphere of transparency. The news media can do their job best when such information is openly disclosed.

The language we refer to was originally filed as Amendment #2365 to the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 (S 3240), commonly called the Farm Bill. It mandated disclosure of "the name of each individual or entity who obtained a federally subsidized crop insurance, livestock, or forage policy or plan of insurance during the previous fiscal year" -- along with related information such as the amount of payment. We realize that this language may not find a parliamentary opening to be offered, but we want to support it.

SEJ is the largest and oldest organization of journalists who cover topics related to the environment. Its members work in a variety of media including television, radio, print, and online. SEJ monitors the transparency of government agencies, including USDA, through its Freedom of Information Task Force and the associated Watchdog Project. Many of our journalist-members cover agriculture and food issues as well as purely environmental ones.

Again, thank you for putting forth this important amendment.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Whetzel, President
Society of Environmental Journalists



*Strengthening the quality, reach and viability of journalism across all media
to advance public understanding of environmental issues*