



Friends *of the* Everglades

Sent via electronic mail to GovernorRon.DeSantis@eog.myflorida.com

April 27, 2021

Gov. Ron DeSantis
Office of Governor Ron DeSantis
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Re: Harmful impacts of “Right to Farm” bill (Senate Bill 88)

Dear Gov. DeSantis:

I’m writing on behalf of Friends of the Everglades, an alliance of thousands of Floridians founded by Marjory Stoneman Douglas in 1969 to preserve, protect and restore the only Everglades in the world.

On your desk awaiting your signature is a bill that would, if signed, enact sweeping new protections for Florida’s farmers.

As you know, Senate Bill 88 has been touted by proponents as safeguarding the "right to farm," shielding farmers from nuisance lawsuits filed by those who move to rural areas then want to shut down the noise and the smell.

But you, of course, know the real effect of SB 88: To indemnify the sugar industry from the harm it causes and might cause in the future.

The bill could shield sugarcane growers from legal action, such as the class-action suit filed against the industry by residents of the Glades communities, who argue that sugarcane burning causes long-term health problems.

The old and young are particularly susceptible to respiratory problems caused by burning during the 6-8 month harvest season. Falling ash, called “black snow,” covers cars and sidewalks.

Regulations prohibit the burning when winds are blowing to the east, toward affluent coastal areas. But the less-privileged Glades communities receive less consideration; when the wind blows in their direction, burn permits are nonetheless granted. And the smoke can travel for upwards of 20 miles.

But SB 88 stipulates that only those who live within half a mile of an agricultural operation could bring a legal case against these detrimental impacts. It also expands the definition of protected farm activities to include “particle emissions.”

There is another way. Burn-free, sustainable “green harvesting” has been embraced by sugar growers around the world; but implementing it here might cut into the powerful sugar industry’s profits.

So even as we learn more about the detrimental effects of breathing in the smoke and soot from the burning cane fields, it's clear SB 88 represents an invaluable gift to the sugar industry.

Are you prepared to tie the bow atop of that gift with your signature?

During your 2018 campaign for governor you vowed not to take sugar industry money and derided sugar subsidies as corporate welfare. On environmental issues, you positioned yourself as a Teddy Roosevelt Republican, a different kind of leader.

Sign this bill and you will demonstrate fealty to the same old paradigm we thought — and hoped — you might challenge.

We ask you to veto this bill which may be good for the sugar industry, but bad for the state of Florida.

Respectfully,



Eve Samples
Executive Director

900 SE Federal Hwy., Suite 323, Stuart, FL 34994



(305) 669-0858



info@everglades.org



www.everglades.org