

News Release

For Immediate Release

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SPELL URGES QUICK ACTION TO "POTENTIAL THREAT" TO AGRICULTURAL INTERESTS

A November 4 ruling in Oktibbeha County Chancery Court has grave implications for agricultural interests, according to Lester Spell, Jr., Commissioner of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC). Spell said that the court decision, which prompted the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to cancel public hearings for two commercial swine operations, is a threat to agriculture's very existence.

"I will be working with DEQ and the legislature toward swift and complete resolution to the situation by all necessary means," said Spell. "Unless we do, costly consequences will impact all Mississippians, because agriculture is the state's largest industry."

"As Commissioner of Agriculture, I have to look at the total picture. While these decisions on their face may be confined to swine farms right now, over-zealous application of the ruling could bring down the very basis of Mississippi's economy."

"This ruling could impact operations that create or 'issue' any emissions deemed, objectively or subjectively, 'offensive' to any neighbors," said Spell. "Taken to its extreme, it could affect backyard barbecuing and burning wood in your fireplace."

Spell adds that the judge's ruling is ill timed, because the State Legislature and DEQ are both working on resolving concerns over large-scale swine farms. "I would hope the ruling will be revisited, either by reversal or by strict limitations to its application, until the Legislature and DEQ have had time to develop appropriate, responsible laws or

regulations to address concerns," said Spell.

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