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EDITORIAL

Standing, Stretching, Turning Around

The goal of the California Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act — Proposition 2 on the state's November ballot — sounds extremely modest. It would ban the confinement of animals in a way that keeps them from being able to stand, sit, lie down, turn around and extend their limbs. The fact that such fundamental decencies have to be forced upon factory farming says a lot about its horrors. We urge California voters to pass Proposition 2. We urge every state to enact similar laws.

Americans are becoming increasingly aware of how and where food is raised. With that should come real concern. The mantra of industrial farming has always been efficiency, but efficiency has come to mean a pregnant sow — millions of them — confined in a gestation crate barely 2 feet wide and only as long as she is. It means veal-calves rendered virtually immobile in crates barely large enough to contain their bodies. It means endless rows of laying hens kept in battery cages so small that the birds cannot even stretch their wings.

No philosophy can justify this kind of cruelty, not even the philosophy of cheapness. Proposition 2 will not just improve the square footage available to these suffering animals. Reducing the concentration of animals will also help reduce the water and air pollution created by factory farms. It will also begin to redress the imbalance between small farmers and the huge corporations that have acquired vertical, and fundamentally anti-competitive, control over the meat industry.

To a California voter still undecided on Proposition 2, we say simply, imagine being confined in the voting booth for life. Would you vote for the right to be able to sit down and turn around and raise your arms?

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