



STATE INNOVATION EXCHANGE FOOD, AGRICULTURE, AND RURAL ECONOMIES

5-Minute Guide to: SiX's Case Study on Resisting Corporate Power

[Cancer, Co-governance, and Community Power: A Case Study in Democratic Revitalization in Rural Iowa](https://www.organizingjournal.net/index.php/COJ/article/view/52). Community Organizing Journal, October 2026
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Overview: SiX's Food, Agriculture, and Rural Economies Team and Iowa State Representative Megan Srinivas co-authored an academic case study covering the successful defeat against pro-pesticide legislation. The article chronicles a three-year fight to stop a pesticide immunity bill (also known as the "Bayer Bill") in Iowa that would have granted legal immunity to pesticide manufacturers to any health harms their products may cause including deadly cancers. We recommend reading the piece for an in-depth look at this issue, and we're providing this guide to help you cut through the complexity and get the most important points to use in your context. [Read the Full Case Study Here.](#)

If you are a state legislator interested in working on pesticide policy please reach out to SiX's Food, Agriculture, and Rural Economies Team at agriculture@stateinnovation.org

- **Iowa has the second highest rate of cancer and the fastest growing rate of cancer in the United States , likely attributable to exposure to agricultural chemicals and waste. ([Harkin Institute](#), [Gerken et al](#), [Myers et al](#))**
 - The agricultural industry, as with many industries, has been shielded from accountability. Iowa's heavy exposure to agricultural toxics is unique, but the plight of Iowans is the same as many people across the country: their lives are disregarded in favor of corporate profits.
- **Elected Officials in the minority can still win against entrenched corporate control by using rural organizing strategies to build bridges.**

- Progressive state legislators can find common ground with rural communities and their conservative colleagues through shared values. This result is a bi-partisan coalition capable of successfully defeating corporate power grabs.
- **Community-led rural listening sessions are a powerful co-governance tool. Legislators listening deeply to those with lived experience opens the door to collaborative decisionmaking and a stronger democracy.**
 - Iowa State Representative Megan Srinivas partnered with rural Iowa communities and credible partners to host listening sessions across the state in 2025 to hear from communities, farmers, and family members impacted by cancer.
 - The listening sessions were not political platform opportunities or Q&As that centered policymakers or those in power. Local people speak without interruption and were able to share their stories and lived experience.
 - Crucially, these sessions were not legislator-led or centered. They were organized by trusted community voices, including organizations like the Iowa Farmers Union and local doctors. Working in true collaboration guides the process and does not mean soliciting free labor from communities to implement a predetermined policymaker agenda.
- **Co-governance interrupts the vicious cycle of distrust, division, and disinformation, connecting policy makers directly to the public and in the process strengthening democracy.**
 - The listening sessions changed policymaker positions on the issue and specifically the “Bayer Bill” in Iowa, but their greatest impact was in creating long-term, community based power that is rooted in trust and commonality rather than transactional calculus.
 - Rural people—similar to many groups—are easy to ignore in a transactional analysis. [Bayer can purchase a much louder political voice](#) in the policymaker process. However, when political decisions are based in shared humanity, seeing your neighbors and their loved ones suffer is impossible to ignore and state policy that more accurately reflects communities prevails.

Resources: For more information on the topic of Bayer Bills, pesticide Impacts and state policy please review the below resources:

- State Innovation Exchange: [Pesticide Policy & Bayer Bill Portfolio with new grab-and-go State Legislator op-ed!](#)
- [Cancer, Co-governance, and Community Power: A Case Study in Democratic Revitalization in Rural Iowa](#). Community Organizing Journal, October 2026