



S.T.O.P. – Safe Tables Our Priority

Working Together To Make Safe Food A Reality

September 28, 2007

Dear Senator,

S.T.O.P.—Safe Tables Our Priority – strongly opposes any new provisions to the Farm Bill or any other legislation that would permit state-inspected meat and poultry products to be sold in interstate commerce. Adoption of any such provisions would put additional consumers at risk by permitting wider distribution of meat and poultry produced under less rigorous state inspection programs.

S.T.O.P. is a national non-profit volunteer health organization dedicated to preventing illness and death due to contaminated food by advocating sound public policy, increasing awareness and providing victim assistance. Many of our members have personally suffered a foodborne illness or had loved ones die from unsafe food.

Not only do we oppose the interstate shipment of state-inspected meat and poultry products, but S.T.O.P. also advocates the abolishment of all state meat and poultry inspection systems. One need only read the Audit Report of the USDA Office of Inspector General, issued in September 2006¹ to find ample information to support disbanding state inspection systems. For example, four states—Mississippi, Kansas, North Dakota and Wisconsin—were determined to have 77-100% of sampled establishments with HACCP and SSOP deficiencies.² These types of deficiencies can, and do, lead to direct food-safety threats to consumers. Yet these plants were allowed to continue operations.

The American public is counting on Congress to strengthen the safety of our food supply. Allowing the interstate shipment of state-inspected meat and poultry is counterproductive to achieving that goal and must not occur.

Congress made a wise decision when it prohibited the interstate commerce of state-inspected meat, and that decision was supported as recently as December 2002, by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, which determined that Congress was justified in limiting the shipment of state-inspected meat to the state in which it is produced. In its decision, the Court stated that though the USDA keeps an eye on state inspection programs, it is possible that a state program could deteriorate without the USDA's knowledge, therefore providing Congress a rational basis to restrict the interstate transport of state-inspected meat.³

Senator, why would you support provisions that would undo the very sound public health protections that are still justified? We urge you to reject all efforts that would allow the interstate transport of state-inspected meat and poultry products. American lives are counting on you.

Respectfully,

Nancy Donley
President and mother of Alex (1987-1993)

¹ USDA Office of Inspector General, Southeast Region, Audit Report, *Food Safety and Inspection Service—State Meat and Poultry Inspection Programs*, Report No. 24005-1-AT, September 2006.

² *Id.* At 8.

³ See *Ohio Department of Agriculture vs USDA*, Case 01-3146 2002 U.S. App. Lexis 24623, December 3, 2002.