

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 23, 2017

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration,
and Related Agencies
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 129
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration,
and Related Agencies
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 190
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Merkley:

As the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies considers the Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) Appropriations Bill, we respectfully ask you to retain the Udall-Kirk Amendment language from the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 (Division A, Title VII, Sec. 767), and continued by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2017 (Division A, Title VII, Sec. 762), that ensures that no funding is authorized for horse meat inspectors or inspections, which would prevent domestic horse slaughter plants from operating.

Specifically, we ask that no funds be appropriated to pay the salaries or expenses of USDA personnel to inspect horses under section 3 of the Federal Meat Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 603); or to implement or enforce section 352.19 of title 9, Code of Federal Regulations. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2006 (FY06) with the inclusion of the defund language and in Fiscal Year 2008 (FY08) with the prohibition on user fees, Congress has been prohibiting the slaughter of horses through the annual Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

The slaughter of horses for human consumption is opposed by 80 percent of Americans for multiple reasons. In addition to the inherent cruelty associated with the practice, allowing horse slaughter operations to return to the United States poses very serious health and safety risks to the American public. Horses are not raised as food animals and are routinely given substances that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration prohibits in animals destined for human consumption.

Requiring USDA funds for the inspection of an unsafe product that Americans do not eat is fiscally irresponsible. In this time of continued budgetary constraints, USDA should not be required to fund unnecessary programs for an unwanted industry. The millions of dollars necessary to conduct horse slaughter inspections will be diverted from inspections of food items

that Americans consume and where it has recently become evident that more inspections may be necessary.

Moreover, the establishment of a domestic horse slaughter plant has the potential to threaten consumer confidence in American beef products. As a result of the 2013 European Union scandal in which horse meat mislabeled as beef, frozen burger sales in the U.K. dropped by 43 percent in the month following the discovery of horsemeat, sales of frozen-meat dishes in France dropped by 30 percent, and sales of ready-made pasta dishes, frozen foods and meat sauces in Italy dropped by 30 percent. It is not difficult to imagine the devastating impact on the U.S. beef industry should a similar scandal happen in our country.

We appreciate your distinguished leadership on this bill. As you work to shape the upcoming FY18 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we respectfully request your review and inclusion of this language. If you have questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to contact us or our staffs.

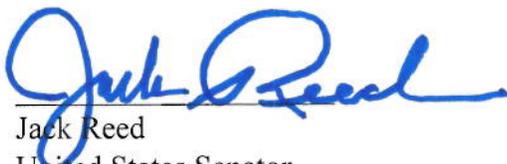
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator


Dianne Feinstein
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Ron Wyden
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Christopher A. Coons
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Bernard Sanders
United States Senator


Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

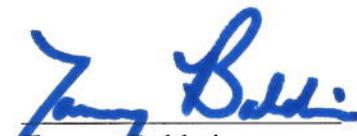

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

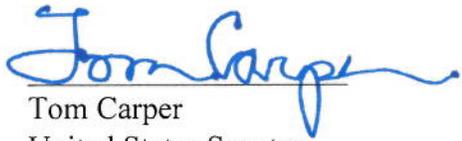

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