



April 7, 2011

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The American meat and poultry industry is committed to providing safe, nutritious, and affordable meat and poultry products to consumers both in the United States and worldwide. To allow the industry to meet that challenge the United States Department of Agriculture must, by statute, provide inspection services. Without such services meat and poultry processing plants are prohibited by law from operating.

As the possibility of a government shutdown becomes more real, so does the threat to the industry's ability to provide a critical component of the food supply. During past government shutdowns, USDA inspectors were classified as "essential" personnel and not subject to work stoppage. For many years, the Office of Management and Budget has deemed essential those employees whose "activities [are] essential to ensure continued public health and safety, including safe use of food, drugs, and hazardous materials." In that regard, the mission statement on the Food Safety and Inspection Service's website states: "The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is the public health agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture responsible for ensuring that the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged." Unfortunately, to date the industry has not received an assurance that meat and poultry inspectors will be deemed "essential" in this budget cycle.

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The meat and poultry industry is the largest component of the U.S. agricultural economy. A government shutdown that fails to classify FSIS inspectors as essential will disrupt not only the operations at meat and poultry processing plants and idle the almost 527,000 people who work there, it will also cause significant disruptions throughout the supply chain, from livestock producers, who will be unable to market their animals, to grocery stores and restaurants that will not be able to supply meat and poultry products to their customers. Indeed, an economic analysis done for the American Meat Institute estimates that **failing to provide inspection services at meat and poultry plants could affect 3.7 million people and their ability to work and cause a loss of roughly \$3 billion in economic activity per day.**

For the foregoing reasons, I respectfully request that USDA meat and poultry inspectors be determined to be essential personnel in the event of a federal government shutdown.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Patrick Boyle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "P".

J. Patrick Boyle  
President and CEO  
American Meat Institute

Cc: The Honorable John Boehner  
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
The Honorable Harry Reid  
The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack  
Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Elisabeth Hagen  
FSIS Administrator Al Almanza