

February 14, 2007

The Honorable _____
U.S. House of Representatives/United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515/20510

Dear Representative/Senator _____:

We urge you to reject the Administration's request for new user fees for meat, poultry and egg products inspection programs in the Administration's FY 2008 budget submission to Congress. These so-called "user fees" for government mandated food safety inspection programs represent an additional \$96 million tax on consumers, livestock and poultry producers and the meat, poultry and egg processing industries.

Meat, poultry and egg products inspection is a public health and safety program required by federal law and funded through tax dollars for over a century. These new food safety taxes will be charged directly to the meat, poultry and egg products sector, who will be forced to pass this additional cost onto tax-paying consumers. Furthermore, this proposal to transform government-funded food safety inspection into an additional fee system provides less accountability for the government to manage program costs, results or efficiencies.

The food safety tax proposal would also put meat, poultry and egg products at a competitive disadvantage in the domestic and international marketplace, compared with other food and imported products not subject to such a tax. Farmers, producers and processors in the meat, poultry and egg sector continuously face rising production costs and unpredictable export markets.

Past efforts to impose user fees for food safety inspection programs have been repeatedly ignored, voted against or opposed by Congress. On October 19, 1999, the House of Representatives voted against user fees for FY 2000, including those proposed for meat, poultry and egg products inspection, by a vote of 410 to 0. The House took a similarly strong position of opposition to user fees in the 105th Congress when it voted against their imposition in FY 1999 by a vote of 421 to 0.

We know of no farm or industry organization that supports imposing a tax to pay for meat, poultry and egg products inspection. We urge Congress to continue to oppose proposals to assess new user fees, either in whole or in part, to fund federally mandated meat, poultry or egg products inspection. If you have questions, please contact any of the signatory organizations.

Sincerely,

American Association of Meat Processors
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Frozen Food Institute

American Meat Institute
American Sheep Industry Association
Colorado Association of Meat Processors
Eastern Meat Packers Association
Food Marketing Institute
Grocery Manufacturers/Food Products Association
Illinois Association of Meat Processors
Indiana Meat Packers & Processors Association, Inc.
Iowa Meat Processors Association
Kansas Meat Processors Association
Louisiana Meat Processors Association
Michigan Meat Association
Mid-States Meat Association
Minnesota Association of Meat Processors
Missouri Association of Meat Processors
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Country Ham Association
National Grocers Association
National Meat Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Turkey Federation
Nebraska Association of Meat Processors
North American Meat Processors Association
North Carolina Meat Processors Association
North Dakota Meat Processors Association
Northwest Meat Processors Association
Oklahoma-Texas Meat Processors Association
Pennsylvania Association of Meat Processors
Shelf-Stable Food Processors Association
South Carolina Meat Processors Association
Southeastern Meat Association
Southwest Meat Association
United Egg Association
United Egg Producers
Virginia Association of Meat Processors