

House Introduces Legislation To Lift Prohibition On Interstate Shipment Of Meat, Poultry

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Legislation to waive the archaic laws which prohibit the interstate shipment of state-inspected meat and poultry products was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Texas Congressman William "Mac" Thornberry (R). Passage of the legislation would help create new jobs and eliminate the unfair market re-

strictions that have forced hundreds of small processors out of business.

"I think the report proposal to reform the nation's meat inspection system is a wise one," Thornberry said. "But it's also incomplete. The industry is currently governed by two 25-year old laws. Both of these laws contain a provision which prohibits state-

inspected beef from being sold in other states unless it's subject to inspection from the federal government."

Thornberry said that foreign countries have a competitive advantage over states in getting their beef sold in America. "What this means is that Texas beef cannot be sold in Oklahoma unless it's inspected by someone from

Washington — but beef from Mexico, Canada, or another country can," he said.

"This is both unjust and unfair," Thornberry said. "If beef from Mexico is safe to eat in Lawton (Oklahoma) without federal poultry inspection, you can bet your bottom dollar the beef from Texas will be safe to eat there as well."

The unfair restriction affects

approximately 3,000 slaughtering and processing facilities in 26 states that offer state meat and poultry inspection programs. The Federal Meat Inspection Act of 1967 and the Poultry Products Inspection Act of 1968, which established state meat and poultry inspection, require inspection programs administered by the states to be "at least equal to" the inspection standards of the

USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS).

The bill, H.R. 3750, does not automatically lift the ban for all certified state meat and poultry inspections. The bill would require each state to petition the Secretary of Agriculture for the change. The measure would also allow federal inspectors to randomly inspect state-inspected plants in addition to the state inspections.

"The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) strongly supports the Thornberry bill," said Texas Commissioner of Agriculture Rick Perry. "In the last three years, approximately 400 small- and mid-size meat and poultry processors have gone out of business, many because they are unfairly prohibited from interstate commerce. Without passage of this bill this year, many more small packers and processors are going to be forced out of business because of the legislated economic disadvantage they face."

In testimony before the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry on June 26, Perry said that Texas has 364 state-inspected plants that "would benefit from interstate shipment." He said the Texas-inspected plants would increase their employees by approximately 30 percent and add an additional \$450 million in gross sales if the plants were allowed to ship in interstate commerce.

Senators Larry Pressler (R-SD) and Orrin G. Hatch (R-UT) have introduced companion legislation, S. 1862, in the United States Senate.

NASDA is the non-profit association of public officials representing the commissioners, secretaries, and directors of agriculture in the 50 states and four territories.

The advertisement for Sire Power features four black and white photographs of cows. The top-left photo shows a cow standing in a field. The top-right photo shows a cow with its head lowered, possibly grazing. The bottom-left photo shows a cow standing in a field. The bottom-right photo shows a cow standing in a field. At the bottom center of the advertisement is the Sire Power logo, which consists of the words "Sire Power" in a stylized font inside an oval shape.

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