

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 17, 2016

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write with regard to long-overdue protections against anticompetitive, deceptive, and retaliatory practices in livestock and poultry markets. We appreciate your recent comments indicating that USDA intends to move forward with the rulemaking process under the Packers and Stockyards Act to ensure fair competition and implement key provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Producers and consumers alike benefit from competitive and transparent markets. For several years, ill-advised appropriations riders blocked progress on efforts to address market power and competition issues in the livestock and poultry sectors. We worked to remove the so-called "GIPSA rider" in the Fiscal Year 2016 appropriations process to allow the rulemaking process to move forward. We were pleased that the Fiscal Year 2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act did not include a GIPSA rider, and we appreciate USDA taking steps to complete work on this important issue.

While regulation should be limited in the marketplace, it is critical that the playing field be level. Deceptive, fraudulent, retaliatory, and anti-competitive practices have no place in a well-functioning market, and we need to have sound rules of the road to protect consumers, livestock producers and poultry growers in increasingly concentrated market environments.

We expect that you will fully consider the thousands of public comments you have received on this topic to date, as well as the input from five joint listening sessions conducted by USDA and the Department of Justice in 2010. We encourage you to act expeditiously to produce a set of commonsense rules to bring greater transparency and balance to livestock and poultry markets.

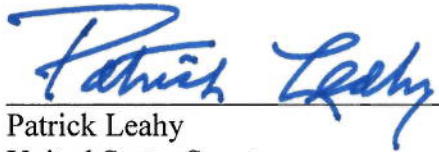
Sincerely,



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



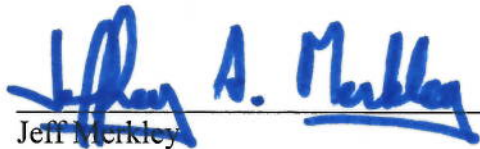
Rosa DeLauro
Member of Congress



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Sam Farr
Member of Congress



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress