



J. Patrick Boyle
President and CEO

February 11, 2013

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 (USDA) must, by statute, provide inspection services. Without such services meat and poultry processing plants are prohibited by law from operating.

As the possibility of sequestration becomes more real, so does the threat to the industry's ability to provide a critical component of the food supply. USDA inspectors have historically been deemed "essential" personnel. Indeed, 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, last Friday Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack stated that in a sequestration scenario across the board cuts would result in furloughs of necessary inspectors, in turn forcing meat and poultry plants to close during that time. The meat and poultry industry is the largest component of the U.S. agricultural economy. Closing businesses as contemplated by the Secretary would, according to USDA, cause production losses of \$10 billion, cost company employees more than \$400 million in lost wages, and impose untold losses on the more than one million livestock and poultry producers in this country.

The meat and poultry statutes impose a legal obligation on the Secretary to provide inspection services.¹ To that end, it is incumbent on the Secretary to examine the options available and develop a plan to provide inspection services, e.g., furlough non-essential agency personnel, in order to satisfy the duty imposed on him by the Federal Meat Inspection Act and Poultry Product Inspection Act.

¹ See Federal Meat Inspection Act, 21 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.* and Poultry Products Inspection Act, 21 U.S.C. 451 *et seq.*

Failure to do so will disrupt not only the operations at meat and poultry processing plants and idle more than 500,000 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.

For the foregoing reasons, I respectfully request that, in the event of sequestration, USDA meat and poultry inspectors not be furloughed so that the Secretary of Agriculture can fulfill his statutory obligations.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Patrick Boyle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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