

NEWS RELEASE
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STATE AGRICULTURE OFFICIALS URGE ACTION ON INTERSTATE MEAT SALES LEGISLATION

Group Launches National Grassroots Campaign to Support Passage

Washington, D.C. – The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) is urging Congress to take prompt action on bipartisan legislation introduced in the House that would allow interstate sales of state-inspected meat and poultry products. Two bills have been introduced in the House—H.R. 1760 by Rep. Ron Kind (WI); and H.R. 2315 by Reps. Earl Pomeroy (ND) and Roy Blunt (MO). State agriculture officials applauded the lawmakers for their efforts to provide open markets and expand economic opportunities for rural small businesses.

Rick Kirchhoff, NASDA Executive Vice President and CEO, pointed out that under current law, meat and poultry products from 34 foreign countries can be freely shipped and sold anywhere in the United States, but domestic small businesses and processors cannot. *“This is unfair and wrong. Why are American small businesses denied the same market opportunities that are given to companies in foreign countries?”* “Our locally-produced, state-inspected meat and poultry are some of the best specialty products in the country,” Kirchhoff said. “Are meat products from foreign countries such as Croatia and Nicaragua better than our own products?”

H.R. 1760 and H.R. 2315 take different approaches to address an important market competition issue and allow state-inspected meat and poultry to be sold in the national marketplace. Both bills will resolve a basic inequity which has existed since 1967. Meat and poultry products (beef, poultry, pork, lamb and goat) inspected under state inspection programs may only be sold within the borders of the state in which it is inspected. This makes no sense whatsoever. NASDA is also leading a national grassroots campaign to support passage of interstate meat sales legislation.

Three USDA advisory committees have recommended that the outdated ban on interstate sales be removed because it would create jobs and stimulate rural economic development. More than 70 national, state and local agricultural organizations have urged Congress to level the economic playing field for small meat processors, and to allow them national market access.

Kirchhoff said that *“allowing interstate meat sales is just plain common sense—no other food commodities inspected by state authorities are prohibited from being shipped across state lines.”* Other state-inspected food products (milk, dairy products, fruit, vegetables, fish and shellfish) are freely marketed across the country. *“Why aren’t the same market options available for meat and poultry?”*

State agricultural officials also noted that the restriction on interstate meat sales does not apply to “non-amenable” products—such as venison, pheasant, quail, rabbit, and a host of others. These products are normally regulated by state inspection programs, yet can be shipped in interstate commerce without restriction. Kirchhoff noted *“ it does not make sense to allow these products to be shipped across state borders while beef, poultry, pork, lamb and goat products cannot be shipped interstate. Where is the logic in this?”*

Interstate meat sales legislation would expand marketing opportunities for farmers and ranchers which they never had before. “We hope Congress will act this year because this legislation will not only benefit producers, processors and small businesses, but it also gives consumers more choices at the supermarket. It’s the right thing to do” said Kirchhoff.

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