

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 23

WHEREAS, Missouri ranks as one of the highest livestock and poultry producing states in the country and the support of this industry is of vital interest to our state; and

WHEREAS, livestock and poultry production play an important role in Missouri's economy, not only for the direct purchase of the products themselves, but also for the economic ripple effects from the purchase of agricultural inputs required to produce the meat and poultry products like grain and hay; and

WHEREAS, the processing and shipping of the meat and poultry is an integral and necessary part of the complete production process; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Meat Inspection Act of 1967 and the Poultry Products Inspection Act of 1968 required all state meat and poultry inspection programs to be equivalent to federal standards; and

WHEREAS, twenty-eight states have adopted state meat inspection programs that equal or exceed federal standards and several more are considering the same; and

WHEREAS, other commodities, such as milk, dairy products, fruit, vegetables, fish, shellfish, and complex canned products, which are inspected under state jurisdiction, are allowed to be marketed freely throughout the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, foreign-inspected meat can be shipped to and sold anywhere in the U.S. as long as that country's foreign inspection program is equivalent to U.S. federal standards, which, in practice, is the same standard that state-inspected programs must meet; and

WHEREAS, Congress, in the 2008 Farm Bill directed the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop regulations to allow state-inspected meat to cross state lines; and

WHEREAS, the new U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations have implemented standards that require state-inspected meat programs to be "the same as" rather than "equal to", thereby requiring states to use the same computer programs and other provisions that provide states with no flexibility; and

WHEREAS, the new regulations limit a processor participating in the program to that which has 25 or fewer employees, disregarding the temporary or part-time nature of employees; and

WHEREAS, the small and mid-sized meat and poultry producers are finding a high consumer demand for locally grown and processed meat and poultry products that is not limited to within a state's border; and

WHEREAS, the ban on interstate shipping does not improve food safety and only serves to slow the growth of small businesses such as farms and processors, limit purchasing options for consumers, impede rural economic development, slow rural job growth, and further encourage the concentration of the meat processing industry:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the members of the Missouri Senate, Ninety-sixth General Assembly, Second Regular Session, the House of Representatives concurring therein, hereby wish to thank the members of Congress who supported the interstate shipment of state-inspected meat in the 2008 Farm Bill and given that the barriers to such sales now reside in regulation not legislation, hereby urge Congress to:

(1) Again address the issue either in the 2012 Farm Bill or as stand-alone legislation or guidance to the U.S. Department of Agriculture to ensure regulations are enacted that will allow the intent of the law to be satisfied and finally allow the interstate sale of state-inspected meat and poultry;

(2) Modify language regarding interstate commerce to allow states to exercise their prerogative to regulate meat sold within their borders regardless of where it originates; and

(3) Specifically allow states to develop their own processes and procedures for the interstate sale and distribution of meat grown and processed within their state borders; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that state legislators, state veterinarians, and state departments of agriculture are encouraged to work collaboratively to develop memorandums of understanding that deem meat, inspected under state law equal to or exceeding the USDA standards, to be eligible for sale in another state; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that upon its passage by the General Assembly, the director of the Missouri Department of Agriculture shall distribute a copy of this resolution to all state departments of agriculture in the nation and the State Agriculture and Rural Leaders Association; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate be instructed to prepare a properly inscribed copy of this resolution for the director of the Missouri Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, the chairpersons of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry and the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture, and Missouri's Congressional delegation.