

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 23, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We, the undersigned members of Congress, strongly oppose the Modernization of Swine Slaughter Inspection rule proposed by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) on February 1. The swine slaughter modernization rule calls for an unlimited increase in swine slaughter line speeds, which will endanger worker safety, public health, and animal welfare. We strongly oppose swine slaughter line speed increases, the new proposed inspection system, and urge you to withdraw the rule.

The proposed Modernization of Swine Slaughter Inspection rule will privatize the food safety inspections system in hog slaughter plants. The New Swine Inspection System (NSIS) would reduce the total number of government food safety inspectors in each plant, and turn over that function to the company, while providing no requirement or funding to train plant employees on inspection technique.

There is no evidence that the increased line speeds can be done in a manner that ensures safe food and safe workers. The USDA justifies the line speed increase by using a small, poorly assessed pilot project where none of the plants continuously operated at faster line speeds and all had serious safety issues. A 2013 USDA Inspector General Audit found that the USDA did not properly assess the pilot project and a report from Food and Water Watch found that the plants involved in the pilot project had more regulatory violations compared to comparably sized plants not involved in the pilot project.

The Modernization of Swine Slaughter Inspection proposed rule removes all limitations on line speeds in hog slaughter plants, which will endanger the health and safety of tens of thousands of workers in the hog slaughter industry. Even at current line speeds, pork slaughter and processing workers face many job risks that can lead to severe injury, illness and death. An increase in line speeds will result in an already dangerous industry becoming more dangerous. Meatpacking workers in hog slaughter plants work in cold, wet, noisy, and slippery conditions making tens of thousands of forceful repetitive motions on each shift. Meatpacking workers are injured at 2.4 times the rate of other industries and they face illness rates at 17 times the rate of other industries.

The Modernization of Swine Slaughter Inspection proposed rule will not lead to safer food. Eliminating line speed limits makes it harder for federal meat inspectors and quality control workers in plants to do their jobs. That means it will be less safe for all of us to eat pork.

The Modernization of Swine Slaughter Inspection rule has moved forward without proper review. To adequately assess the rule's full impact on public health, a final 'peer reviewed' risk assessment must be completed and available to the public for comment. In addition, USDA must make available any data they have about the risks to workers.

The Swine Slaughter Inspection Modernization Rule will increase corporate profits by sacrificing the health and safety of our nation's pork workers and will make pork less safe for every consumer to eat. We urge you to withdraw the rule immediately. If the Agency does not withdraw this rule, the USDA must extend the comment period on this proposed rule until 60 days after the final 'peer reviewed risk assessment' is published and must listen to the voices of the public health, worker safety and animal welfare organizations that have requested the agency to hold public hearings on the proposal.

Sincerely,



Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



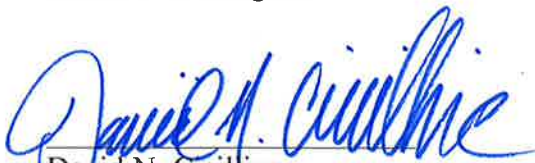
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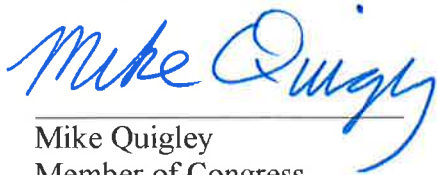
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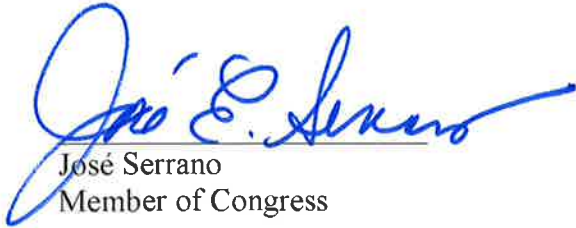
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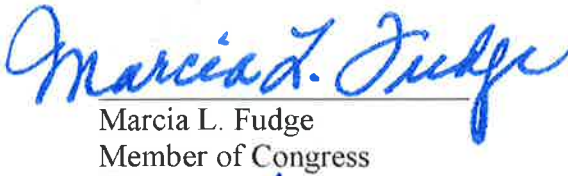
  
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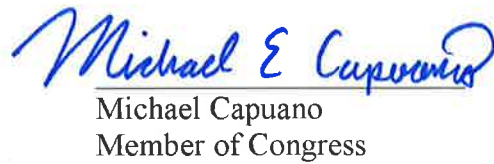
  
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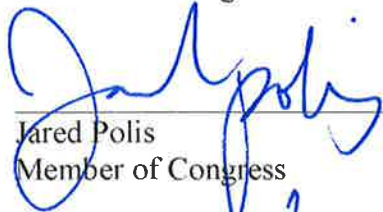
  
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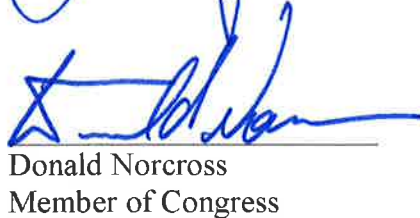
  
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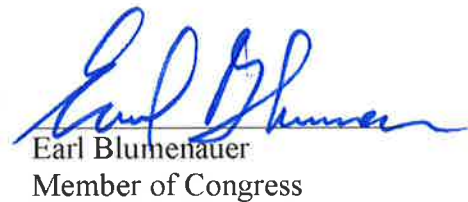
  
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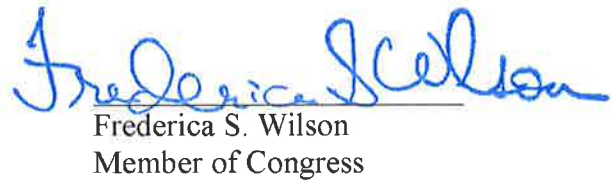
  
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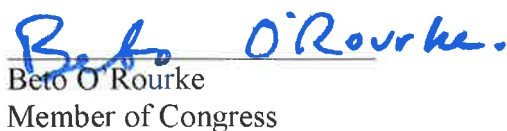
  
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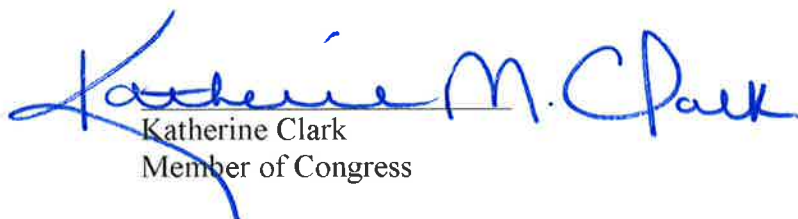
  
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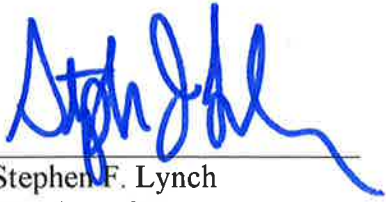
  
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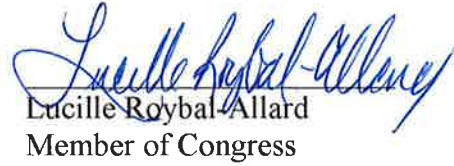
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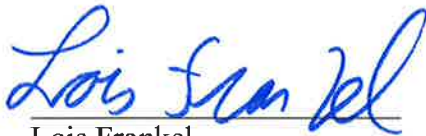
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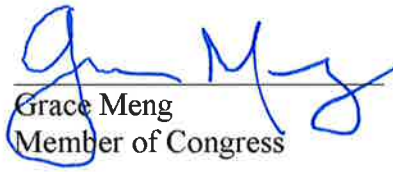
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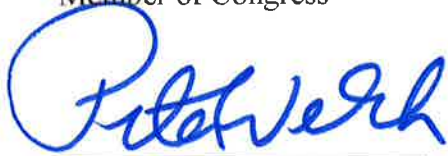
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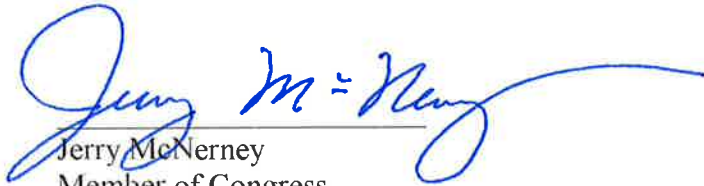
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