



October 14, 2014

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW, Room 200-A
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

State cattlemen's associations listed below, along with the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, which represents more than 30,000 members and 58 organizations representing more than 170,000 cattle producers and feeders, do not support further federal government control of the national Beef Checkoff Program, or involvement of the beef industry in the Commodity Promotion, Research and Information Act of 1996. We respectfully request that you not issue an Order under the 1996 Act, for the following reasons:

- **The 1985 Beef Promotion and Research Act, which beef producers helped craft and supported in a 1988 referendum with a nearly 80 percent support level, assures grassroots involvement through state beef councils.** This grassroots involvement, which was missing from two failed checkoff attempts in the 1970s and 80s, is also not assured under the 1996 Act.
- **The 1996 Act gives much more control and power to the Federal Government.** While we appreciate government oversight to assure funds are properly spent, we don't think the Secretary of Agriculture should have the power to establish the size of the boards, who sits on them, or whether or not the program should even exist.
- **The 1996 Act adds to bureaucracy.** The 1985 Act made it clear that already existing resources, staffs and facilities should be utilized, while the 1996 Act not only allows up to 15 percent of administrative expenses (the 1985 Act caps them at 5 percent), but leaves the door open for limitless administration and red tape.
- **The 1996 Act fails to assure a coordinated national/state partnership concept.** We are extremely concerned that Qualified State Beef Councils and their Federation are ignored in the 1996 Act. State beef council involvement through collection of the dollar, representation on the Beef Promotion Operating Committee and on program-recommending joint checkoff program committees is crucial to our principles.
- **The 1996 Act is too open-ended and subject to government, not producer, direction.** We do not support giving the Federal Government ongoing power to change industry fortunes through agency Orders and executive action with no industry input.

Independent research shows the industry's Beef Checkoff Program enjoys the support of 78 percent of beef producers, as it should. A recent study conducted by Cornell University shows that it returns \$11.20 for every dollar invested. The Office of Inspector General has audited the program and says contractors are in compliance with the 1985 Act and Order. We ask that you help us enhance the Beef Checkoff Program through the 1985 Beef Promotion and Research Act, not through heavy-handed, federally-mandated action.

Sincerely,

National Cattlemen's Beef Association	Alabama Cattlemen's Association
Arizona Cattle Feeders' Association	Arizona Cattle Growers' Association
Arkansas Cattlemen's Association	California Cattlemen's Association
Colorado Cattlemen's Association	Colorado Livestock Association
Florida Cattlemen's Association	Georgia Cattlemen's Association
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council	Idaho Cattle Association
Illinois Beef Association	Indiana Beef Cattle Association
Iowa Cattlemen's Association	Kansas Livestock Association
Kentucky Cattlemen's Association	Louisiana Cattlemen's Association
Maryland Cattlemen's Association	Michigan Cattlemen's Association
Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association	Mississippi Cattlemen's Association
Missouri Cattlemen's Association	Montana Stockgrowers Association
Nebraska Cattlemen	Nevada Cattlemen's Association
New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association	New York Beef Producer's Association
North Carolina Cattlemen's Association	North Dakota Stockmen's Association
Ohio Cattlemen's Association	Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Cattlemen's Association	Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association
South Carolina Cattlemen's Association	South Dakota Cattlemen's Association
Tennessee Cattlemen's Association	Texas Cattle Feeders Association
Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association	Virginia Cattlemen's Association
Utah Cattlemen's Association	Washington Cattlemen's Association
Washington Cattle Feeders Association	Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association
West Virginia Cattlemen's Association	
Wyoming Stock Growers Association	