

Support H.R. 5557 – Farm Animal Welfare/Federal Procurement

Representatives Christopher Shays (R-CT) and Peter DeFazio (D-OR) have introduced the “Farm Animal Stewardship Purchasing Act,” H.R. 5557, to require that those supplying food to the federal government – for the military, federal prisons, school lunches, and other programs – meet a basic set of modest welfare standards for farm animals.

- **Federal law does not provide any protection for billions of animals on the farm.** Each year, more than 10 billion farm animals are raised for meat, eggs, and dairy products in the U.S. While Congress decided nearly half a century ago, with the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1958, that farm animals must have a decent death, there is not a single federal law requiring that chickens, pigs, cows, or other farm animals have a decent life while on the farm.
- **Factory farm practices have become increasingly inhumane.** Today’s industrial factory farms treat animals as nothing more than meat-, milk-, and egg-producing machines. Denied virtually any opportunity to live according to their natures, they’re often crammed into tight, barren spaces and pumped full of antibiotics so their weakened, compromised immune systems can tolerate the unnatural and inhumane conditions.
 - ◆ Egg-laying hens are kept in “battery cages” so restrictive the birds can’t even spread their wings. Each caged hen has less space than an 8½” x 11” sheet of paper for her entire life.
 - ◆ Young calves raised for veal are tethered inside individual crates or stalls so small the animals can’t even turn around during their entire 16- to 18-week lives before slaughter.
 - ◆ Breeding pigs are intensively confined in metal “gestation crates” a mere 22-inches wide for nearly their entire four-month pregnancies, unable to turn around. After they give birth and their piglets are weaned prematurely, the cycle begins again for mother pigs who average two litters each year until their productivity wanes and they are killed.
 - ◆ Ducks and geese are repeatedly force-fed grossly unnatural amounts of food through pipes thrust down their throats to make their livers fatty and diseased for production of foie gras.
 - ◆ Some hens are starved to manipulate their egg-laying cycles in a practice known as “forced molting.”
 - ◆ Livestock too sick or injured to walk to their own death are dragged to slaughter with bulldozers, chains, or forklifts – notwithstanding that “downers” are at high risk of transmissible illnesses, such as “mad cow disease,” *E coli*, and *Salmonella*.
- **Americans want better treatment of farm animals.** The humane treatment of animals, including those raised for food, is a core American value. While most Americans may accept the practice of using animals for food, they do not believe that animals should be tormented while they’re alive. A 2003 Gallup poll indicated that nearly two-thirds of Americans “support passing strict laws concerning the treatment of farm animals.” A 2003 Zogby poll found that nearly 70% of Americans find it “unacceptable” that farm animals have no federal protection from abuse while on the farm, and more than four-fifths of Americans believe there should be effective laws to prevent farm animal cruelty. Consumers have also indicated their willingness to pay more for products from farm animals raised according to higher welfare standards.

- **Retailers are responding to welfare concerns.** Fast-food companies such as McDonald's, Burger King, and Wendy's have all required their suppliers to meet a modest set of animal welfare standards and have refused to use meat from downed animals. Wild Oats Natural Marketplace no longer sells eggs from caged hens, Trader Joe's has made its own brand of eggs cage-free, and Whole Foods Market is developing an entire set of strict animal welfare standards for eggs, dairy products, and meats. Nearly 90 colleges and universities have enacted policies to greatly reduce or eliminate their sales of eggs from caged hens in their dining halls.
- **The federal government can help lead the way.** H.R. 5557 would lead by example, rather than imposing new regulations on industry. The Act would stimulate markets for producers using higher welfare standards and ensure that billions of federal tax dollars are spent in a manner consistent with the federal government's longstanding commitment to the humane treatment of animals.
- **The procurement approach is a modest step.** Mirroring the approach taken by Congress in the original Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, H.R. 5557 doesn't mandate industry-wide compliance, but instead applies only to those producers who voluntarily choose to do business with the federal government. Based on publicly-available data, we estimate that this may involve approximately 1% of total meat, eggs, and dairy products sold in the U.S.
- **The legislation is simple and cost-effective because its provisions are self-executing.** H.R. 5557 will be enforced via the General Services Administration's existing government procurement procedures, along with other standards such as wage and labor requirements and fuel economy standards for government vehicles. The Act will not require any new USDA regulations or expensive agency enforcement bureaucracy.
- **H.R. 5557 sets very basic, reasonable requirements for the treatment of farm animals whose products are purchased by the federal government.** The bill requires producers who supply farm animal-derived products to the federal government to ensure that the animals have:
 - 1) adequate shelter, with space to lie down, extend their limbs, walk, and turn around;
 - 2) adequate food and water, without force-feeding or starvation; and
 - 3) adequate veterinary care, including prompt treatment or humane euthanasia when sick or injured.

These modest standards mean that federal suppliers cannot engage in the most inhumane current industrial farming practices – intensive confinement in battery cages, gestation or veal crates, forced molting of laying hens through starvation, forced feeding for foie gras, hauling of downed animals to slaughter or leaving sick or injured animals to languish without treatment or humane euthanasia.

- **It's time for Congress to act.** Just as Congress saw fit half a century ago to give farm animals a merciful death, it's time for Congress to begin addressing the most inhumane conditions they face during their lives. Farm animals deserve common decency and humane treatment, and this bill is a good step toward that end.