

MAJORITY MEMBERS:

GEORGE MILLER, CALIFORNIA,  
CHAIRMAN

DALE E. KILDEE, MICHIGAN, VICE CHAIRMAN  
DONALD M. PAYNE, NEW JERSEY  
ROBERT E. ANDREWS, NEW JERSEY  
ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT, VIRGINIA  
LYNN C. WOOLSEY, CALIFORNIA  
RUBÉN HINOJOSA, TEXAS  
CAROLYN McCARTHY, NEW YORK  
JOHN F. TIERNEY, MASSACHUSETTS  
DENNIS J. KUCINICH, OHIO  
DAVID WU, OREGON  
RUSH D. HOLT, NEW JERSEY  
SUSAN A. DAVIS, CALIFORNIA  
DANNY K. DAVIS, ILLINOIS  
RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, ARIZONA  
TIMOTHY H. BISHOP, NEW YORK  
LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ, CALIFORNIA  
JOHN P. SARBANES, MARYLAND  
JOE SESTAK, PENNSYLVANIA  
DAVID LOEBSACK, IOWA  
MAZIE HIRONO, HAWAII  
JASON ALTMIRE, PENNSYLVANIA  
JOHN A. YARMUTH, KENTUCKY  
PHIL HARE, ILLINOIS  
YVETTE D. CLARKE, NEW YORK  
JOE COURTNEY, CONNECTICUT  
CAROL SHEA-PORTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE



COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2181 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6100

MAJORITY (202) 225-3725  
MINORITY (202) 225-4527  
<http://edlabor.house.gov>

MINORITY MEMBERS:

HOWARD "BUCK" MCKEON, CALIFORNIA,  
SENIOR REPUBLICAN MEMBER

THOMAS E. PETRI, WISCONSIN  
PETER HOEKSTRA, MICHIGAN  
MICHAEL N. CASTLE, DELAWARE  
MARK E. SOUDER, INDIANA  
VERNON J. EHLERS, MICHIGAN  
JUDY BIGGERT, ILLINOIS  
TODD RUSSELL PLATTS, PENNSYLVANIA  
RIC KELLER, FLORIDA  
JOE WILSON, SOUTH CAROLINA  
JOHN KLINE, MINNESOTA  
CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS, WASHINGTON  
KENNY MARCHANT, TEXAS  
TOM PRICE, GEORGIA  
LUIS G. FORTUÑO, PUERTO RICO  
CHARLES W. BOUSTANY, JR., LOUISIANA  
VIRGINIA FOXX, NORTH CAROLINA  
JOHN R. "RANDY" KUHLL, JR., NEW YORK  
ROB BISHOP, UTAH  
DAVID DAVIS, TENNESSEE  
TIMOTHY WALBERG, MICHIGAN  
DEAN HELLER, NEVADA

February 14, 2008

**VIA FACSIMILE (202) 512-5507**

The Honorable David M. Walker  
Comptroller General  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Walker:

Late last month, the Humane Society of the United States released an undercover video of abuses of cattle at the Westland/Hallmark Meat Co., one of the top suppliers of beef to the National School Lunch Program, which serves our nation's children in schools across the country.

The video showed employees using forklifts, electric shocks, and other inhumane means to force non-ambulatory (or "downer") cows to stand so that they would pass federal inspection in the slaughterhouse. Because meat from non-ambulatory cows presents a higher risk of E. coli and salmonella contamination and bovine spongiform encephalopathy, federal law bans it from entering the food supply.

Along with all Americans who watched the Humane Society's disturbing videos, we are concerned about the mistreatment of animals at Westland Meat Co. We are writing today because of urgent concerns this incident raises about food safety in the National School Lunch Program and the implications for our children's health and well-being.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which oversees the National School Lunch Program, immediately alerted school districts to pull and hold all suspected beef from Westland following the release of the undercover video. Schools are currently holding beef products until an investigation can determine whether contaminated meat entered the school food supply.

While these initial steps by USDA were appropriate, they leave unanswered a larger question about the overall effectiveness of the federal government's effort to ensure the safety of meat in the school food supply. We request that GAO thoroughly examine: (1) the process for protecting

Comptroller Walker  
February 14, 2008  
Page 2

our students from dangerous food; (2) how quickly and accurately schools can assess and pull potentially contaminated products; and (3) the information, guidance and resources about inspections, suppliers' histories, and safe handling practices the USDA provides to local authorities.

This review will help us to determine what steps are necessary to ensure our children's health by preventing tainted beef from entering the school food supply.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. Please direct your staff to coordinate GAO's investigation with the Education and Labor Committee's Chief Investigative Counsel, Michael Zola, who can be reached at (202) 226-9403.

Sincerely,



**GEORGE MILLER**  
Chairman  
Committee on Education and Labor



**CAROLYN McCARTHY**  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Healthy Families



**ROSA DeLAURO**  
Chairwoman  
House Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Agriculture



**RICHARD J. DURBIN**  
Senator

Cc: Edward Schafer  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Howard "Buck" McKeon  
Ranking Member, Committee on Education and Labor