



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

Support Legislation to Promote U.S. Egg Industry and Advance Animal Welfare

The United Egg Producers, which represents over 90% of the nation's egg industry, and The Humane Society of the United States, the nation's largest animal welfare organization, have been long-time adversaries, but have come together and identified a solution for housing 280 million laying hens that balances animal welfare and the economic realities of the industry. The nation needs this kind of problem solving, and Congress should enthusiastically embrace it.

The **Egg Products Inspection Act Amendments (S. 820 / H.R. 1731)** would:

- require conventional cages to be replaced during an ample phase-in period with new, enriched colony housing systems that provide each egg-laying hen nearly double the amount of current space;
- require that, after a phase-in period, all egg-laying hens be provided with environmental enrichments, such as perches, nesting boxes, and scratching areas, that will allow hens to express natural behaviors;
- mandate labeling on all egg cartons nationwide to inform consumers of the method used to produce the eggs—“eggs from caged hens,” “eggs from hens in enriched cages,” “eggs from cage-free hens,” and “eggs from free-range hens”;
- prohibit feed- or water-withdrawal molting to extend the laying cycle, a practice already prohibited by the United Egg Producers Certified program;
- require standards approved by the American Veterinary Medical Association for euthanasia of egg-laying hens;
- prohibit excessive ammonia levels in henhouses, with temporary exemptions for extraordinary weather;
- prohibit the transport and sale of eggs and egg products nationwide that do not meet these requirements;
- make explicit that bill only applies to commercial egg production, not any other livestock or poultry production.

If enacted, the proposal would require egg farmers to increase space per hen in a tiered phase-in, with the amount of space hens are given increasing, in intervals, over the next 15 to 16 years. (Phase-in schedules are more rapid in California, consistent with a ballot initiative approved earlier by that state's voters.) Currently, the majority of hens are each provided 67 square inches of space, with some receiving just 48 square inches. The proposed phase-in would culminate with a minimum of 124 square inches of space for white hens and 144 for brown hens nationwide.

Eggs are a national commodity, and egg farmers should have a level playing field—not have different, costly rules in all 50 states. Uniform regulations help both the farmers and consumers. Through consistent rules, eggs can be produced and packaged uniformly to reduce consumer costs and meet public expectations of safe, wholesome food.

Leading scientists in the egg industry embrace this reform, and say enriched colony cages are the best all-around solution for hen welfare, industry economics, and an affordable egg supply for consumers. The legislation has been endorsed by all the major stakeholders, including veterinary groups, animal welfare groups, and egg producer groups.

American consumers overwhelming support nationwide improvements in housing of laying hens. An independent poll by the Bantam Group found that consumers support the federal legislation by a 4-to-1 margin, prefer a federal standard over state standards by a 2-to-1 margin, and support the transition to enriched colony cages by a 12-to-1 margin.

This is a matter of self-determination for the egg industry based on the best available science, consumer expectations and economics of egg production.

On April 25, 2013, S. 820 was introduced by Sen. Feinstein (D-CA), and H.R. 1731 was introduced by Reps. Schrader (D-OR), Denham (R-CA), Farr (D-CA), and Fitzpatrick (R-PA). For more information, please visit UEP at www.eggbill.com and HSUS at www.humanesociety.org, or call (770) 360-9220 (UEP) or (202) 955-3668 (HSUS).