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SUBCOMMITTEES ON
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 10, 2013

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture,
1400 Independence Ave
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I write to bring your attention to the immense opposition by many of my constituents in New Mexico to the proposal by Valley Meat Company to open a horse slaughter plant in Roswell, N.M. Most New Mexicans consider horse slaughter inhumane, unpalatable and an unviable solution to the abandoned horse problem.

Horse slaughter has been essentially forbidden in the United States due to a Congressional prohibition on funding for inspections of horse meat. Although this prohibition has recently expired, it would be inadvisable for your department to resume horse slaughter inspections.

As you are aware, the British Food Standards Agency recently discovered horsemeat mixed into frozen food products. Since this discovery, European regulators have uncovered contamination from horsemeat in a number of food products labeled as beef and sold to consumers. These discoveries have severely damaged the sales of frozen foods in Europe and are representative of the difficulties inherent in preserving an unadulterated and highly valued U.S. beef supply, should U.S. slaughterhouses begin to slaughter horses as well.

While the recently-passed Agriculture Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2013 included an additional \$55 million for the Food Safety and Inspection Service, this increase was intended to ensure that existing inspections for beef, chicken and pork continue through the sequester, not for horse meat inspections. Unlike cattle, horses are not raised as food animals in the U.S. and are routinely treated with substances that have not been approved by the FDA for human consumption. Inspections would require extremely stringent screening protocols which do not exist.

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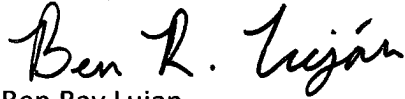
Utilizing funds to craft and implement a new protocol for horse meat would be contrary to Congressional intent and be inadvisable considering the likely resumption of the Congressional rider banning the inspections in upcoming fiscal years.

Officials at all levels, including Senator Martin Heinrich, Governor Susanna Martinez and New Mexico Land Commissioner Ray Powell, have spoken out against the Valley Meat Company proposal.

While I realize you are lawfully bound to give the proposal consideration, please consider the strong policy reasons and growing local opposition to this facility as you move forward with the application process.

I appreciate your immediate attention to this matter and I look forward to being kept updated about the status of this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben R. Lujan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "B" and "L".

Ben Ray Lujan
Member of Congress