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UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ROSA L. DeLAURO
3RD DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

February 20, 2008

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POLICY COMMITTEE

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COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

The Honorable Ed Schafer
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
Room 200-A, Jamie L. Whitten Building
12th Street & Jefferson Drive, SW
Washington, DC 20250-0002

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I strongly urge you to pursue an emergency rule that would list all of the retail consignees associated with the historic 143 million pound recall of beef products from the Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing Company in Chino, California. As part of this emergency rule, I also strongly urge you to release the school districts that received beef products that were subjected to the recall. These products reached consumers and school districts through wholesalers who provided the beef products to other companies for processing, so it is critical that this information be made available.

Subsequent to USDA's recall announcement, no clear information has been made available on the products involved and this has resulted in consumer confusion about whether they, or their local school district, purchased products subject to the recall. While there have been sporadic reports that identify school districts, stores and restaurant chains that have received the recalled products, this information is incomplete, which only exacerbates the confusion.

An especially frustrating aspect of this situation is the proposed rule pending before the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) that would permit the agency to list retail consignees on its recall press releases. Unfortunately, this proposed rule has been delayed for far too long – it was issued on March 7, 2006 and the comment period for it closed on June 11, 2006. Despite repeated inquiries from Congress about its status, it is always explained to us that it is under departmental review. As you know, this proposed rule is supported by Dr. Richard Raymond, USDA Under Secretary for Food Safety. After almost two years of departmental review, it is time to allow this proposed rule to move forward, and I urge you to work with your colleagues in the Administration to make this happen.

An emergency rule that would list all of the retail consignees and the school districts involved in the Hallmark/Westland beef recall is warranted given that this is the

largest meat recall in U.S. history. Also, I am convinced that had the proposed rule on retail consignees had been in effect during this recall, clearer information would have been available to consumers about the products subjected to the recall. I strongly urge you to proceed with both measures in order to better protect consumers from potentially contaminated foods.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosa L. DeLauro". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "R".

ROSA L. DeLAURO

Chairwoman

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture
Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration,
and Related Agencies