

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 11, 2014

Tom Vilsack, Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

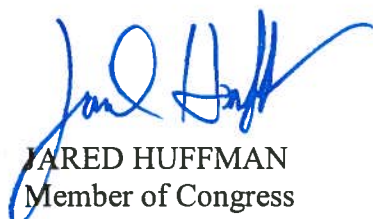
Over the last several months, the Department of Agriculture (USDA) has overseen a major recall at the Rancho Feeding Corporation processing plant in Petaluma, California. This recall has prompted serious public concern and federal investigations by the U.S. Attorney's Office, the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, and the USDA Office of the Inspector General (OIG). Importantly, this recall has also significantly harmed affected ranchers, who continue to raise questions about the cause of the recall and any recourse available to compensate them for damages. Unfortunately, despite our requests, our constituents have received very little information from USDA in response.

This recall demands a serious investigation, so that answers can be provided to ranchers and the public as a whole as soon as possible. On June 11, the House of Representatives approved our amendment (H.Amdt. 847) to increase funding for the USDA OIG, demonstrating congressional support for the OIG and for completing the Rancho investigation as swiftly as possible. It is important to hold responsible those accountable for this breakdown in food safety. As we noted on the House floor, the amendment transfers \$1 million to the OIG, so that more resources are available to swiftly complete this investigation, close the case, and make sure we get answers, so that we can prevent this from happening again. The longer this investigation drags on, the more uncertainty businesses face.

After six months of investigations, the OIG has not closed the case nor responded to media reports of misconduct, including reports of an intimate relationship between a USDA inspector and an employee of the slaughterhouse. Given the significant impact this situation has had on our congressional districts, and the apparent threat posed to food safety, we ask that you support the swift completion of the ongoing investigations, and we ask for your support for implementing any recommendations made as a result of these. In addition, we ask again that you provide us with an update regarding the status of USDA's pending investigations into Rancho, and what information has been discovered about the activities at Rancho.

Thank you for your continued engagement on this issue.

Sincerely,



JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress



MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress