

January 8, 2014

Honorable Debbie Stabenow
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture
328A Russell Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC, 20510

Honorable Frank Lucas
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Thad Cochran
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture
328A Russell Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC, 20510

Honorable Collin Peterson
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
1305 Longworth House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of the Farm Bill Conference Committee,

The undersigned groups representing millions of taxpayers and allied educational bodies write to urge you to repeal the duplicative catfish inspection program at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in the soon-to-be-finalized Farm Bill. The undersigned groups have been vocal critics of the Farm Bill conference report, but there is one provision that may make taxpayers smile, the repeal of the catfish inspection program. The catfish inspection program is a program that has spent \$20 million over four years and not inspected a single fish. It's a program the Government Accountability Office has targeted five times as a waste. It's a program that the former Chief Judge of the highest court of international trade says will result in not just a trade war but a lawsuit the U.S will lose. It's a program that's on track to spend \$170 million making USDA do a job FDA is already doing.

According to an April 24, 2012 bipartisan letter to Senate Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), "And beyond the fiscal implications, the catfish program has caused considerable concern among trade experts. According to them, the program would create a discriminatory *de facto* ban on exports from key trading partners and expose us to retaliation....We are aware that no scientific data that catfish, imported or domestic, pose any greater food safety risk than other farmed seafood – all of which will remain under FDA regulation."

A March 23, 2011 Associated Press (AP) article noted that "a rise in cheaper Asian imports over the past decade, most recently from Vietnam, has fueled a series of 'catfish wars' between domestic and foreign producers. After winning tariffs and strict labeling restrictions against the Vietnamese fish, the U.S. industry pushed through what could be a death blow with the inspections law in the 2008 farm bill. The law made catfish the only seafood in the U.S. to fall under USDA's purview..."

The Wall Street Journal and *The New York Times* have opined in stereo about the absurdity of the program. When the Senate had the chance to vote on repeal the voice vote was deafening. And, the House passed repeal by a wide margin. It started with a handful of members of Congress. Then it was 25 and 50, then 150 and now opposition to the program is universal among members who rally around common sense.

Repealing the USDA catfish inspection program is common sense, will save money, and is a step in the right direction of fiscal responsibility.

Sincerely,

David Williams, President, Taxpayers Protection Alliance

Phil Kerpen, President, American Commitment

Stephen DeMaura, President, Americans for Job Security

John F. Tate, President, Campaign for Liberty

Jonathan Bydlak, President, Coalition to Reduce Spending

Iain Murray, Vice President, Competitive Enterprise Institute

Mattie Duppler, Director, Cost of Government Center

Tom Schatz, President, Council on Citizens Against Government Waste

Seton Motely, President, Less Government

Pete Sepp, Executive Vice President, National Taxpayers Union

Andrew Moylan, Outreach Director and Senior Fellow, R Street Institute

Stephen Ellis, Vice President, Taxpayers for Common Sense

CC: Honorable Harry Reid

Honorable Mitch McConnell

Honorable John Boehner

Honorable Nancy Pelosi

Honorable Eric Cantor

Honorable Steny Hoyer