

Cattlemen Left Behind by Congress

Last week, cattlemen were once again left behind in an appropriations bill, which passed the Senate. The bill included a provision to prohibit The Grain Inspection Packers and Stockyards Act (GIPSA) from using any funds to write rules to implement and enforce the Packers and Stockyards Act (P & S Act). Senator Tester (D-MT) offered an amendment that would have negated that provision, but the Senate leadership did not allow it to advance, not even bringing the amendment to a vote.

In the past few years, GIPSA has worked to enforce the P&S Act. It has written policy to help enforce the law for both cattle and poultry producers, and it successfully followed through to assist poultry producers from deceptive and manipulative practices.

GIPSA is a department of USDA that facilitates the marketing of livestock and other agriculture commodities and promotes fair and competitive trading practices for the overall benefit of consumers and American agriculture. The P & S Act, enacted in 1921, is still law today and prohibits packers from engaging in unfair and deceptive practices.

"What good is a law if you cannot enforce it? As long as funding to enforce the GIPSA rules are withheld, Congress is telling GIPSA they cannot do their job. It also implies that U.S. producers, who grow and raise a healthy and wholesome product, are not on Congress' priority list. If we do not nurture production agriculture and stand up for our food growers, there will be fewer producers and America's food supply will eventually be outsourced. That will affect consumers, and they won't be happy with food that is rarely inspected, produced with less oversight and safety procedures, and shipped in from foreign lands," stated KCA Executive Director Brandy Carter.

The bill has gone to the House and passed on March 21. It was signed by the President on March 26. The bill takes effect immediately and is set to expire at the end of this fiscal year, September 30, 2013.

"We will use this time to work with legislators and national organizations to restore language that is positive to cattlemen and their interests," concluded Carter.