

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 27, 2008

The Honorable Jim Nussle
Director
The Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Nussle:

We urge you to immediately request from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) its proposed rule to provide to the public lists of retail consignees of meat and poultry products that have been voluntarily recalled by federally inspected meat or poultry plants. This rule has been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) once before and is currently under final review at USDA.

The announcement by USDA last week of the largest meat recall in U.S. history – 143 million pounds of beef products – highlights the importance of providing consumers with sufficient information during a recall so that they can take the necessary precautions to protect themselves and their families. Last week's announcement comes on the heels of more than 20 beef recalls in the last year. Consumers are understandably concerned about the safety of the food supply and are particularly anxious for information when a recall is announced.

When a recall is announced, consumers need sufficient information so they can determine if products they have purchased are part of the recall. In the case of the Westland Meat recall, information provided to consumers has been incomplete and confusing. If this rule had been in effect, consumers would have been provided additional information to help them determine if they had purchased the recalled meat and where they could return it.

Unfortunately, a series of memoranda of understanding between the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and State and Federal agencies currently denies consumers the right to know where recalled meat products have been sold. This is unacceptable and only serves to keep useful information from consumers when recalls are announced.

We strongly support the proposed retail consignee rule and urge you to request it from USDA so that it can be quickly approved. Implementing this rule will enhance the current recall process by giving FSIS another tool to help ensure safe and effective recalls of contaminated products. This is an important consumer protection measure that should be implemented in a timely manner.

Sincerely,



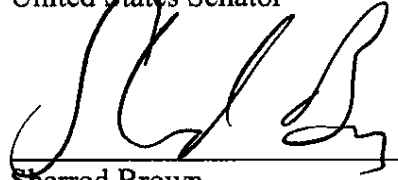
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tom Harkin
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator