

Keep Those Calls Coming for the PRIME Act

Tell Your Congressmen to Cosponsor HR 2814 / S.907

Congress has returned from its summer break. It will now be stepping up its work on the 2023 Farm Bill. Thanks to those of you who responded to last month's alert and contacted their senators and representatives. Your calls and emails have made a difference; the chances for the PRIME Act to be included in the Farm Bill are greater than they were a month ago.

The PRIME Act [House Resolution 2814 ([H.R. 2814](#)) and Senate Bill 907 ([S.907](#))], badly needed legislation that would allow states to pass laws legalizing the sale of custom slaughtered and processed meat in intrastate commerce, has been before Congress the past eight years; there has never been a better chance to pass this bill than now.

The PRIME Act has a better chance of passing into law as part of the Farm Bill rather than as stand-alone legislation. Giving the bill momentum was a congressional hearing in [June](#) that the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Administrative State, Regulatory Reform, and Antitrust held titled "Where Is the Beef? Regulatory Barriers to Entry and Competition in Meat Processing"; a focus was on the PRIME Act as a solution to the difficulties small farmers and ranchers have in meeting demand for local meat with the current laws in place that favor the big meatpackers. There had never been a congressional hearing on the PRIME Act since Rep. Thomas Massie first introduced the measure in 2015.

It remains important for you to contact again anyone representing you in Congress who did not sign onto the PRIME Act as a cosponsor. To assure inclusion in the Farm Bill, the more cosponsors HR 2814/S.907 can get, the greater the chance of the measure passing. Your participation and help is making that happen.

ACTION TO TAKE

Call and/or email your U.S. Representative and both your U.S. Senators and ask to sign onto [HR 2814](#) / [S907](#), if they have not already done so (tap the bill links below to see list of cosponsors). Calls are best.

HR2814 – [https://www.congress.gov/bills/118/congress/house-bills/ 2814/cosponsors](https://www.congress.gov/bills/118/congress/house-bills/2814/cosponsors)

S.907 – [https://www.congress.gov/bills/118/congress/senate-bills/ 907/cosponsors](https://www.congress.gov/bills/118/congress/senate-bills/907/cosponsors)

You can look up who represents you at <https://www.congress.gov> or call the Capitol switchboard at [202-224-3121](tel:202-224-3121).

TALKING POINTS

1. Passage of the PRIME Act would better enable farmers to meet booming demand for locally produced meat. Right now in parts of the country, farmers have to book a slaughterhouse slot as much as 1-1/2 to 2 years out. Moreover, farmers often have to transport their animals several hours to a slaughterhouse, increasing their expenses and stressing out the animals which could affect the quality of the meat. Passage of the PRIME Act would significantly increase access to local slaughterhouses.

2. Passage of the PRIME Act would improve food safety. Anywhere from 95% to 99% of the meat produced in the U.S. is slaughtered in huge facilities that process 300–400 cattle an hour.

It is difficult to have quality control in the plant under those conditions no matter how many inspectors are present. The records bear this out. According to CDC statistics from 2005–2020, there were thousands of foodborne illness from the consumption of beef and pork. The big plants process more animals in a day than a custom house would in a year. There is better quality control in a custom slaughterhouse, inspector or no inspector. A 2020 FOIA request to USDA, seeking the number of foodborne illnesses from 2012 to 2020 attributed to the consumption of meat slaughtered and processed at a custom facility received a response from USDA that it had no record of any such illnesses. Custom operators have every incentive to process clean meat. Where a lawsuit against a big plant is just a cost of doing business, one lawsuit can easily shut down a custom house.

3. Passage of the PRIME Act would improve food security. Supply chain breakdowns and labor shortages have made the food supply more vulnerable. Passage of the PRIME Act would improve food security by increasing the local supply of quality meat, food that for most of us is critical for a healthy diet.

4. Passage of the PRIME Act would not be competition to the conventional meat industry; the meatpacker and small farms have mostly different markets. One sells mainly into the export market and big supermarket chains; the other sells into local communities direct to consumers and small mom-and-pop stores.

5. Passage of the PRIME Act would keep more of the food dollar in the state and community. The big food corporations send much of the money they earn out of the state; more of the money that local farmers, ranchers and custom house operators earn would circulate within the state and community, strengthening the local economy.

6. The PRIME Act would create jobs. More custom slaughterhouse operations would start up if meat from those facilities could be sold by the cut. Many of the people who would be starting up a custom operation are not interested in operating a federally inspected slaughterhouse; both expenses and red tape are much greater for the latter.

7. The PRIME Act would improve animal welfare; most farmers would not have to transport their animals as great a distance if they could take them to a custom house. This would result in less potential for injury. Animals overall are treated more humanely in custom facilities than in USDA facilities, in many of which thousands of animals are slaughtered and processed per day.

8. Passage of the PRIME Act would benefit the environment by reducing the carbon footprint in the transport of animals to slaughterhouses. The majority of farmers live closer to a custom slaughterhouse than to an inspected facility.

MORE BACKGROUND

Current law provides that the sale of meat is legal only if the animal is slaughtered and processed at a facility under state or federal inspection; “inspection” in this context means that an inspector is present when slaughtering or processing takes place. This requirement went into effect due to Congress passing the Wholesome Meat Act of 1967, disastrous legislation that has been largely responsible for the formation of oligopolies in the beef and pork industries. Custom slaughter and processing facilities do not require that an inspector be present, but only the owners of the animals are allowed to receive the meat slaughtered and processed at custom houses. The sale of custom meat is illegal. The PRIME Act would lift the federal ban on the sale of custom meat. Custom facilities would still be subject to federal and state regulations,

including inspection; however, inspectors would no longer have to be on site at custom facilities during slaughtering and processing of animals for meat sales to be legal in intrastate commerce.

Further alerts will be sent out on the PRIME Act as events warrant .

LINKS

HR 2814 – <https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/house-bill/2814>

S907 – <https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/house-bill/2814/cosponsors>

Hearing video – <https://youtu.be/jky4-J-Tsc0>