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United States Senate
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COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS
AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE ON
CONTRACTING OVERSIGHT

May 20, 2009

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary, Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

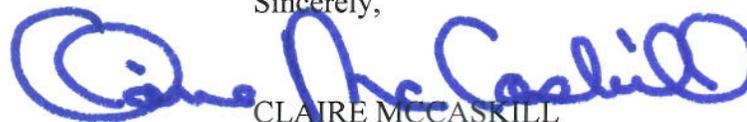
Dear Secretary Vilsack:

Thank you for your April 27 letter in response to my concerns regarding the proposed implementation of a mandatory National Animal Identification System (NAIS). I appreciate hearing your views about the program as well as reading the detailed response provided by officials at USDA APHIS. Nevertheless, we continue to disagree on many points. I share the concerns of many of my constituents that a mandatory NAIS program would include harmful costs to small producers without providing real food safety benefits to consumers.

I also appreciate the fact that APHIS has embarked on a tour of listening sessions to discuss NAIS with local stakeholders in various states. I believe that it is crucial that those potentially affected by this regulation have the opportunity to have their voices heard. While I understand you have twice had the opportunity to visit with producers in Missouri it has not yet been to discuss NAIS. Given that a location in Missouri is not listed as a current stop on USDA's listening tour, I respectfully request that APHIS include a forum Missouri for their next set of listening sessions.

As you know, animal agriculture is more than a primary factor in Missouri's economy; it is also part of the state's cultural fabric. I feel that the objective of hearing stakeholder concerns and possible solutions to address those concerns will be served by hearing from producers in Missouri—both large and small. I hope that as you consider additional listening sessions you will make sure to include a stop in Missouri. If you would like assistance in choosing a site for a listening session in Missouri, please do not hesitate to contact my Legislative Counsel, Nichole Distefano, at 202-224-6154.

Sincerely,



CLAIRE McCASKILL
United States Senator

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