



SENATOR
RICHARD D. YOUNG JR.
116TH INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY ★ SENATE DISTRICT 47

NEWS RELEASE

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Young questions cuts to state meat and poultry inspection program
Change could result in job loss for 1,600 Hoosier meat packers

INDIANAPOLIS –State Senator Richard D. Young, Jr. (D-Milltown) delivered a letter to Governor Mitch Daniels today to express his concern over the administration's recent decision to reduce the funding for the Indiana state meat inspection programs. The State Board of Animal Health announced a 50% funding reduction to the program. The \$900,000 reduction in state funds will lead to a loss of matching federal funds, resulting in a total cut of \$1.8 million for the program responsible for inspecting 134 meat processing facilities in Indiana.

The estimated increase in value to the state's economy from direct marketing of freezer meet processed through the state inspected facilities is estimated to be over \$35.8 million. Much of the meat that goes through these facilities is from local farms selling direct to local consumers, farmers markets and restaurants.

"I have been involved in economic development in rural Indiana for decades and have never been more excited than what I have seen recently with the growth in direct marketing of livestock products. I have constituents marketing to restaurants, farmers markets and through consumer supported agriculture programs. I even have constituents whose children feel they can come home to the family farm and make a living with these niche markets, something we need to happen to stop the rural brain drain of the last decade," Young wrote in his letter.

According to Young, the United States Department of Agriculture would be required to take over inspections if the state is unable to do so as a result of the funding cut. However, the federal agency is not required to accept every plant, nor are they required to work with small processors to ensure their compliance. A takeover by the federal government could force many of Indiana's facilities to make costly renovations to meet federal standards or close. An estimated 1,600 employees could lose their jobs at facilities that may be forced to close. The change will also impact producers who currently sell their product through farmers markets and to local restaurants.

When similar action was taken in Alaska, Kentucky, Michigan and Idaho, two thirds of the plants in those states closed within three years. Kansas and Minnesota reinstated their state programs specifically because the state programs are very different than the federal program in terms of philosophy and approach. State programs are more accessible and flexible while remaining dedicated to food safety.

For more information on Sen. Young, his legislative agenda or other State Senate business call 1-800-382-9467 or visit www.senatedemocrats.in.gov.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Sen. Richard Young's letter addressed to Governor Daniels is available at http://www.in.gov/legislative/senate_democrats/files/Young.GovLtr.MeatInspect.012610.pdf