

11/25/2003 Entry: "Congressional Leaders Pressured by NCBA, NPPC and UFFV to Kill COOL"

R-CALF United Stockgrowers of America

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(Billings, MT) OsterDowJones reported today that United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Ann Veneman has identified the groups that are working to pressure Congress to kill COOL. According to the report, Veneman identified the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC), and the United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association (UFFVA) as the groups responsible for blocking implementation of mandatory country of origin labeling.

R-CALF United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA) President Leo McDonnell said today that Congress has been deceived into believing that producers and consumers are against COOL. "Nothing could be further from the truth," McDonnell said, adding, "The memberships of these anti-COOL organizations pale in comparison to the more than 200 organizations representing literally millions of members in the general farm, commodity, cattle, consumer, and other groups who worked tirelessly to pass mandatory COOL into law in 2002."

"The interests of producers are being compromised by organizations purporting to represent producers, but who actually incorporate the financial interests of packers in their policies," McDonnell said.

McDonnell pointed out that despite NCBA's claim that independent cattle producers do not want mandatory country of origin labeling, 76 United States cattle associations, representing 26 states and including 17 NCBA state affiliates, worked with R-CALF USA to pass mandatory COOL in the 2002 Farm Bill. "Since that time, even more state cattle associations have adopted policies in support of mandatory COOL," he said. McDonnell said the overwhelming majority of independent cattle producers have publicly voiced their support for mandatory COOL.

McDonnell said the leadership of the ongoing Appropriations process is being misled by just a few special interest groups; causing the leadership to ignore the vast majority of the independent producers and consumers who won COOL in a fair fight against the packers and retailers in the 2002 Farm Bill. But, he said, the

opposition has sunk to a new level by convincing Congressional leaders that COOL should be stripped behind closed doors. "This does not bode well among the hard working producers and consumers of this nation who respect an open, democratic system of government," he said.

But producers and consumers do have recourse and they can still defend COOL, explained McDonnell. He said R-CALF USA is urging producers and consumers to immediately call their elected officials to demand that Congress defend the hard-fought COOL law. "Congress needs to hear from individual producers and consumers that they want mandatory COOL to be implemented on schedule," McDonnell said, adding, "Our best recourse to back-door politics is for the people of this nation to force the issue back into the daylight where the actions of special interest groups are fully disclosed to the voting public."