

## **11/26/2003 Entry: "Dean Blasts Bush for Putting Corporate Interests, Meatpackers, Ahead of American Farmers"**

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The 2002 Farm Bill required mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) be implemented by September 30, 2004. Today, Congressional negotiators of the Omnibus Appropriations bill, with the backing of the meatpacking industry and the White House, struck a deal that will delay implementation of COOL for at least two years.

"This is just another example of the White House and Republican leadership allowing their biggest corporate contributors to set policy," responded Democratic Presidential candidate Governor Howard Dean, MD. "As with the terrible energy and Medicare bills, negotiations were conducted by GOP leadership behind closed doors, with no input from Democrats or the public."

In the 2004 election cycle to date, agribusiness interests have given President Bush \$1.8 million - ten times as much as the next recipient. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association, an industry group leading the fight to kill COOL, is one of the top agribusiness contributors.

"COOL is important for our farmers and our consumers," Dean said. "Consumers have a right to know where their food comes from and American farmers deserve to receive a premium for their quality products. Despite the support of 50 million Americans, 135 advocacy groups and a bipartisan majority in the Senate, the White House and its allies have effectively killed this important program.

"Since being elected, George Bush has consistently put the interests of corporate agribusiness ahead of family farmers and rural America. He has sought to exempt meatpackers from the Clean Air Act, despite evidence

that emissions from large hog confinements cause serious health problems. He has allowed the merger of Smithfield and Farmland to go through without lifting a finger. He has failed to implement not only COOL, but also other important elements of the Farm Bill like the Conservation Security Program and the Rural Business Investment Program.

"When I am president I will never allow the meatpacking industry to set our agriculture policy. I will work to ensure that our farmers can once again achieve a fair price for their products by implementing programs like COOL and working to reverse the 'deadly combination' of concentration and integration that has decimated so many of our family farms."