

06/18/2003 Entry: "House Sub-Committee Caves to Beef Industry Groups"

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The more concentrated segments of the cattle feeding, meat packing industry, and beef industry groups, in a furtive attempt to derail country of origin labeling (COOL) by any means necessary, has railroaded through the House Agriculture Appropriations Sub-Committee legislation to eliminate funding for the implementation of COOL. Introduced by Sub-Committee Chairman Henry Bonilla (R-TX), the language in the bill states, “None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this act shall be used to propose or issue rules, regulations, decrees, or orders for the purpose of implementation or in preparation for implementation of country of origin labeling for meat or meat products.” The bill will now be debated in the House Appropriations Committee, probably within the next week.

“I am gravely disappointed in the House Ag Appropriations Sub-Committee. So many tactics have been attempted to shoot down COOL, from manipulating data to misrepresentations of the laws in place to outright deception. Rep. Bonilla has sold out the cow-calf producers, not only in Texas, but producers across the U.S., as well as our customers who are most responsible for the passage of the law,” stated R-CALF USA Region V Director Chuck Kiker of Beaumont, TX.

“Emotions are running high due to BSE being found in Canada. Two of our major beef customers abroad – Korea and Japan – are demanding U.S. beef be born, raised, and processed in the U.S.A. Bonilla’s act has the potential to undermine the integrity and confidence between U.S. producers and our most important resource, domestic and international consumers,” said Kiker.

While the House Appropriations Committee was eager to approve a \$9 billion budget for border protection and related activities, its Agriculture Sub-Committee gave no thought to the increased awareness and confidence consumers would derive from labeled foods.

R-CALF USA calls upon cattle producers, their organizations, and consumers nation-wide to contact their Representatives and the House Ag Committee to voice their strong opposition to this legislation and reiterate their support for COOL.

R-CALF USA is on the agenda to testify at a June 24th hearing on COOL held by the full House Ag Committee. R-CALF USA and its producer membership contend COOL will help restore competition to the U.S. cattle industry and improve consumer awareness.

“The fact COOL was passed and continues to engender strong support testifies to our nation’s desire for this law,” said R-CALF USA President Leo McDonnell. “This attempt to delay and repeal COOL comes as no surprise. The opposing

beef industry groups have been showing their cards for quite some time. They are hoping U.S. cattle producers will roll over. Instead, I suggest you step forward, call your U.S. Representatives, and join R-CALF USA in restoring a voice for the U.S. cattle industry.”

R-CALF USA, the Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America is a national, non-profit cattle association representing cattle producers in the areas of trade and marketing. R-CALF USA has 8,700 individual members in 43 states and more than 46 affiliated local and state cattle and farm organizations. For more information, visit www.r-calfusa.com or call 406-252-2516.