



STATE OF ARKANSAS
ASA HUTCHINSON
GOVERNOR

June 24, 2016

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan
Speaker
House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi,

I write you to express my concerns with S.J. Res. 28 and show my support for catfish inspections by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Arkansas's aquaculture industry produces more than twenty species of fish and crustaceans and ranks second among aquaculture-producing states. Arkansas leads the nation in per capita consumption of catfish and also is home to the world's largest bait-fish farm, large-mouth bass farm, goldfish farm and hybrid striped bass hatchery. Many hard-working Arkansans put countless hours into an industry which provides fish products that consumers can trust are harmless while also remaining affordable. At the same time, Arkansas catfish consumers want to continue having confidence that the product on their plates is safe for consumption.

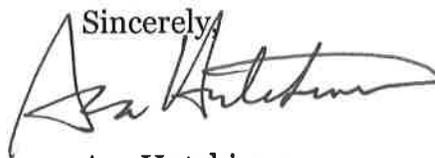
The transfer of catfish inspection responsibility from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) does just that. This transfer comes as a result of numerous amounts of evidence that suggests imported catfish products pose a significant food safety threat. This new inspection policy is designed to protect consumers from those dangers in imported catfish products.

While previous catfish inspections were overseen by the FDA, an underwhelming 0.2 percent of imported fish were inspected, proving that the previous program was ineffective and inadequate. Now, both imported and domestic catfish inspections fall under the FSIS's responsibility, whereas the inspections of meat, poultry and egg products fall as well.

This new inspection program is already providing critical food safety benefits. Since its implementation, which started on March 1st, this new policy has already produced positive results in a fair and reasonable manner and kept millions of catfish consumers from harm. In just a few months on the job, FSIS inspectors have already stopped and returned two tainted shipments of catfish.

As you know, S.J. Res. 28 would discontinue the established mandatory inspection program by the FSIS for catfish, but more importantly, it would impose a public health risk on our nation's citizens. I strongly oppose this Resolution, and I request that the House leadership not take up S.J. Res. 28.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


Asa Hutchinson

cc: The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Majority Leader
The Honorable Steve Scalise, Majority Whip
The Honorable Steny Hoyer, Minority Whip
The Honorable Pete Sessions, Chairman, House Committee on Rules
The Honorable Louise Slaughter, Ranking Member, House Committee on Rules