

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
April 12, 2013

Contact: Gynnie Robnett, Coalition for Sensible Safeguards, 202-683-4813,
vrobnett@foreffectivegov.org

Groups Oppose President's Budget Assumptions on Finalization of USDA Poultry Rule

Following the release of President Obama's FY 2014 budget, public interest groups representing a range of causes and perspectives weighed in to express their disappointment with the proposed budget's provisions concerning USDA's new poultry inspection protocols. USDA's pilot HIMP program, which increases poultry inspection line speeds and reduces the number of federal regulators, has been [called into question](#) for its negative impact public health. Here is what groups said this week:

Center for Effective Government:

"Safety advocates have urged [the US Department of Agriculture] to assess whether the rule would jeopardize consumer health and to consider the potential costs to the American workers involved in processing poultry (both plant workers and inspectors). At least 48 million people (1 in 6) are sickened by a food-borne illness each year. If finalized, this rule could increase that number."

[Center for Progressive Reform:](#)

"The proposed rule is bad for food safety. USDA has tried out pilot programs that allowed poultry slaughterhouses to speed up their lines and move government inspectors off those lines. Food & Water Watch obtained compliance records and found troubling results, including that bile, sores, scabs, feathers, and digestive tract tissue are often not being properly removed from chicken carcasses."

[Food and Water Watch:](#)

"The Obama Administration's proposed cuts to the FY 2014 budget for USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) pave the way for an ill-conceived proposal to remove government inspectors from slaughter facilities and turn over their responsibilities to company-paid employees...Although the final rule has not been published, the proposed FY 2014 budget makes the rule a fait accompli."

[Government Accountability Project:](#)

"One former USDA inspector, Phyllis McKelvey, is now retired and has come out publicly against the plan...Phyllis delivered nearly 200,000 petition signatures to the USDA in November, urging the agency to withdraw its proposal and recognize why it poses problems for public health. The agency states that the new rule will save federal dollars but there will be a higher price to pay at the dinner table, where the integrity of our nation's poultry is at risk. The President needs to rethink the upcoming budget and heed the warnings of whistleblowers on the front line."

National Consumers League:

“We are disappointed that the Administration has chosen to move forward with this irresponsible proposal which would endanger public health, especially after such vocal opposition from labor, consumers, and many others,” said [Executive Director Sally] Greenberg, “NCL has serious questions about the safety of workers and the food they produce under this scheme, none of which have been adequately answered. While judicious spending is essential, creating savings by sacrificing worker and food safety is not the answer.”

Southern Poverty Law Center:

“Among our findings from over 300 interviews with Alabama poultry workers were that over three-fourths (78 percent) of workers said that an increase in the line speed makes them feel less safe, makes their work more painful, and causes more injuries. The USDA’s proposed increase in line speeds beyond the already dangerously fast rates poses a serious risk to hundreds of thousands of workers around the country, as an increase in the burden on each worker may have long-term and permanently disabling effects.”



The Coalition for Sensible Safeguards is an alliance of consumer, small business, labor, scientific, research, good government, faith, community, health, environmental, and public interest groups, as well as concerned individuals, joined in the belief that our country’s system of regulatory safeguards provides a stable framework that secures our quality of life and paves the way for a sound economy that benefits us all. For more information about the coalition, see [http://www.sensiblesafeguards.org/about us](http://www.sensiblesafeguards.org/about_us).