

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3806

February 17, 2011

Secretary Tom Vilsack
1400 Independence Avenue SW
STOP 0101
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

As you know, Congress has charged the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) with enforcing the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), a law that requires basic protections for millions of animals at sites across the country. However, these laws are only as effective as the USDA's enforcement of them.

In May 2010, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) of USDA released an audit of the Animal Care (AC) program within USDA's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). The audit found that AC's inspections of large-scale dog dealers (i.e., breeders and brokers) failed to expose and highlight inhumane treatment of animals. In a previous audit of laboratory animals, the OIG found that AC did not aggressively pursue enforcement actions against violators of AWA. The May 2010 audit determined that (1) AC's enforcement process was ineffective against dealers with repeated violations; (2) APHIS misused its guidelines to lower penalties for AWA violators; and (3) some large breeders circumvented AWA by selling animals over the Internet. APHIS concurred with the OIG's findings.

As a result of these findings, it is our understanding that you committed Department effort and resources to step up oversight and policing. Almost a year later, we are requesting that you provide a detailed response as to what the Department is doing to correct the problems outlined in the report. We look forward to hearing from you shortly and thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Jim Gerlach
Member of Congress

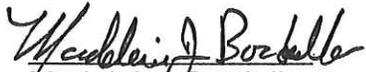


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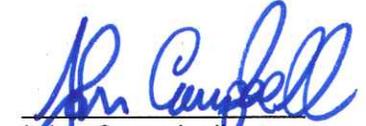


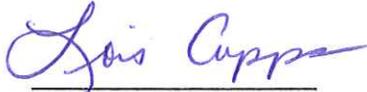
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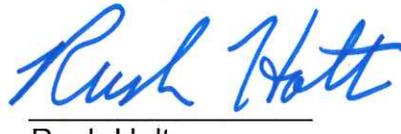

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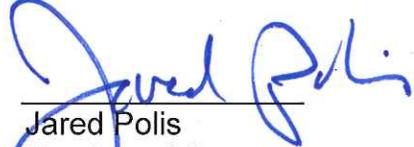

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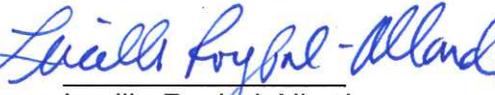

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