

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 17
INTRODUCED BY J. COHENOUR

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA URGING THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT TO ALLOW THE INTERSTATE SHIPMENT OF MEAT THAT IS PROCESSED IN APPROVED STATE-INSPECTED MEAT PROCESSING AND PACKING FACILITIES, AS ALLOWED BY UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE REGULATIONS.

WHEREAS, agriculture is Montana's top industry and Montana's cattle ranchers produce beef of exceptional quality that is desired nationally and around the world; and

WHEREAS, the continued success of agriculture is dependent on the economic development practice of adding value to existing products; and

WHEREAS, the input cost of transporting meat for processing places an additional burden on Montana's ranchers, who are already struggling to remain viable in a volatile marketplace; and

WHEREAS, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations allow for state-inspected meat processing and packing plants, and the USDA considers state-inspected plants to be commensurate with federally inspected plants; and

WHEREAS, the USDA thoroughly inspects and approves state-inspected meat processing and packing plants every 3 years; and

WHEREAS, the USDA pays one-half of the cost of state inspection for state meat processing and packing plants, provided that state standards equal or exceed federal standards; and

WHEREAS, Montana's meat processing standards are more stringent than federal standards; and

WHEREAS, state-inspected meat processing and packing plants have been operating successfully and safely in Montana for over 20 years; and

WHEREAS, the market for specialized meat products is expanding, and producers need access to processing plants to capitalize on these new consumer tastes; and

WHEREAS, consumers appreciate the right to choose agricultural products that are produced and processed in Montana; and

WHEREAS, despite USDA regulations that allow the interstate shipment of state-inspected meat, federal law restricts state-inspected meat from interstate commerce, thereby forcing Montana ranchers to use out-of-state meat processing and packing plants and to pay the added transportation costs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the United States government be urged to lift its ban on the interstate shipment of meat processed in approved state-inspected meat processing and packing plants.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State send a copy of this resolution to Montana's Congressional Delegation and to the Governor of Montana.

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