

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

December 21, 2017

Phyllis K. Fong, Inspector General
USDA, Office of the Inspector General
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Phyllis K. Fong:

We write today regarding our continued concerns with alleged misconduct within the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and its effect on meat processing facilities in Montana. The allegations date back to 2005 and remain a concern for the affected Montana communities. It is clear that an external investigation is necessary to resolve allegations and prevent the occurrence of any additional FSIS issues in our state. That is why we respectfully ask that you review the alleged misconduct and report your findings to America's taxpayers.


We have all heard from impacted small business owners and individuals in various Montana cities on the conduct of FSIS. The Montana delegation brought these concerns to three successive Administrations but Montanans still have not received a clear, satisfactory answer on the outcome of investigations into the allegations, nor have we seen any official agency response to the alleged misconduct. Local and state governments have raised concerns, but their concerns have not been publicly addressed.

In response to a complaint filed with FSIS in 2006 by Bart Riley, of Riley's Meats based in Butte, Montana, FSIS responded that some of Mr. Riley's allegations were substantiated. However, FSIS did not publicly enumerate which allegations those were and what, if anything, was done to mitigate or correct the situation. Our offices pressed FSIS for additional information on this report as well as other documents pertaining to their internal review of the situation and were repeatedly told that information could not be shared publicly.

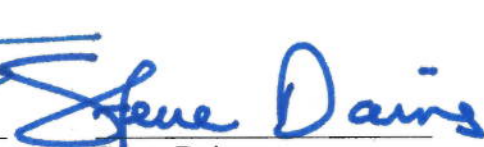
We most recently called on Secretary Perdue to review this matter. We are pleased that USDA performed an additional review, but we are frustrated by the internal nature of the review and the lack of documentation provided in a transparent manner. We believe the long-running nature of this situation calls for an independent review that can be provided to the public, a task your office is best suited to perform.

We look forward to your expeditious response to our request. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Steve Daines
United States Senator



Greg Gianforte
United States Congressman