



TERRY E. BRANSTAD
GOVERNOR

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

KIM REYNOLDS
LT. GOVERNOR

April 2, 2012

Fellow Governors and Lieutenant Governors,

Governors across this country are at the forefront of job creation, knowing which tools are needed in our respective states to lure and keep businesses, ensuring we do everything within our power and ability to enable the creation of jobs our constituents need and deserve.

Each individual state has specific needs, specific goals, and specific ideas on fostering meaningful job and career opportunities for its citizens. In some states, it might be incentives. In others, it may be a change to taxes and regulations. It is not easy, and in many ways it is an uphill battle, but one we are all willing to wage in order to improve the economic health of our communities.

However, despite our different approaches, one thing that all of us can agree on in our job creation efforts is this: Private companies should not be smeared with false slurs, lies and distortions that cause job eliminations. Period.

We are writing you today to join us in rejecting the smear campaign against lean, finely textured beef and instead embrace the science, data and facts that support this as a healthy and safe product. USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack stands behind this product, noting the numerous safety tests this product has routinely undergone and passed with sterling results.

We were pleased to be joined last week by Governor Perry, Governor Brownback, Lieutenant Governor Rick Sheehy and Lieutenant Governor Matt Michels in support of a company that produces lean, finely textured beef, Beef Producers, Inc., in our states.

Sadly, lean, finely textured beef has come under fire in recent weeks, as critics dubbed the product with derogatory smears designed to drive people away from consuming this product.

We are writing you today to join us in sharing the facts regarding lean, finely textured beef with your public schools, restaurants and supermarkets, and encourage them to continue using this product, and not succumb to the negative, unwarranted hype that is attempting to destroy the this product.

The safety of this food is unmatched. In more than 20 years, there has not been one sickness or death associated with E. Coli or other bacteria. If lean, finely textured beef is pulled from our grocery shelves, restaurants or public school lunches, the risks will be greater in using products deemed less safe.

Perhaps even more important is the battle we are waging against childhood obesity. First Lady Michelle Obama recently joined me at a rally where 10,000 students learned the value of exercise, eating well and taking good care of their bodies. By removing this lean product, schools will be forced to serve a fattier, unhealthier product. Our goal is to make Iowa the healthiest state in the nation over the next 5 years. We will not get there if we take a step backwards by removing lean, finely textured beef.

There will always be naysayers who attempt to bully you away from particular products. Make no mistake – if we, or the USDA, believed for a moment that the facts, science and health safety were against lean, finely textured beef, we would not be advocating for it so strongly. Specifically, in the case of BPI, Inc., they have repeatedly demonstrated the quality and safety of their lean beef, numerous third party taste panels confirm that consumers strongly prefer ground beef that contains BPI's lean, finely textured beef.

We are asking you to set an example and not succumb to the bullying that is occurring about this product.

If this product ceases to exist in schools, grocery stores and restaurants, it is estimated that 3,000 jobs will be lost. The equivalent of 1.5 million head of cattle would vanish from the market. Beef prices across this country will steadily rise. But that is just the start. This product is proudly raised, fed, processed, packaged, transported and sold in every state in this country. By supporting this great product, you will send a strong signal on behalf of those who rely on it for their living.

Sure, it would be easy to simply disregard the poisonous nature of these unfounded, unwarranted attacks on lean, finely textured beef by looking the other way, thereby offering a quiet endorsement of their claims.

However, if we fail to combat the ugly slurs and distortions that try to define lean, finely textured beef in an untrue, negative way, then we will have failed employers and consumers all across this country. Employers rely on their elected leaders to do what's right, and if we fail to stand up the bullies who seek to belittle or eliminate products backed up by sound science and a history of purity, where will it end? Today's beef smear is tomorrow's software slur, automobile distortion, tourism scare, or any other falsehood propelled on the American people in an attempt to dismantle an entire industry or product. This should not, and cannot, stand.

Fortunately, we have the facts on our side.

For your information, we have included a letter we sent to every superintendent in Iowa last Friday, March 30th. I would ask you to do the same.

Additionally, we are sending you "Questions and Answers About Lean Finely Textured Beef" that will assist you in sharing the science and facts behind this safe, healthy product. We encourage you to assist us in getting out this information far and wide in order to combat the smear campaign that has put so many families under assault, wondering if their jobs will continue to exist.

It's safe. It's healthy. It's the right thing to do. Thank you for your serious consideration helping us do what's right in standing up for this healthy, safe and lean product.

Sincerely,



Gov. Terry E. Branstad



Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds