

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 21, 2009

Secretary Tom Vilsack
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Ambassador Ron Kirk
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Ambassador Kirk,

We write to express our strong support for implementation of Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) in accordance with Congressional intent, and to discuss with you our appreciation for your continued support for upholding mandatory COOL as the World Trade Organization (WTO) dispute settlement process continues.

As you know, the United States Congress worked to reauthorize the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) in a bipartisan fashion. Included in this most recent Farm Bill is a common sense plan to implement a mandatory food labeling program effectively and in a manner that ensures enhanced consumer information in the grocery store aisle. We believe that, in a manner consistent with General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) obligations, the COOL program as signed into law in the 2008 Farm Bill is nondiscriminatory in its treatment of imported goods, mandating that both domestic and imported goods covered under the law be labeled with country of origin.

We appreciate your efforts thus far in successfully blocking Canada's and Mexico's original panel requests as heard on October 23, 2009, by the WTO Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) under the WTO Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes (DSU). The second dispute settlement panel request was heard by the DSB on November 19, 2009, and a panel was consequently established as a result of WTO process requiring consensus for the blocking of a second panel request.

Over forty-five other nations have each already implemented a food labeling program which provides country of origin information to consumers. As you know, both Canada and Mexico have implemented food labeling programs of their own to make such information available. Some of the origin labeling programs implemented in other countries require that more information be made available to the consumer than what is required by the food labeling program in the United States. The food labeling programs established to date in other countries clearly indicate that the United States is implementing a reasonable program which is compliant with our trade obligations.

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For these reasons, we encourage you to continue to support the mandatory food labeling program authored by the United States Congress during reauthorization of this most recent Farm Bill, and thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



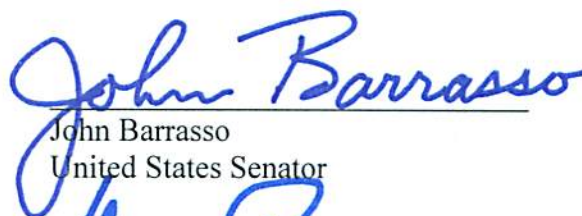
Tim Johnson
United States Senator



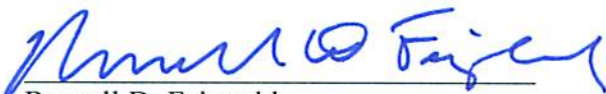
Mike Enzi
United States Senator



Byron L. Dorgan
United States Senator



John Barrasso
United States Senator



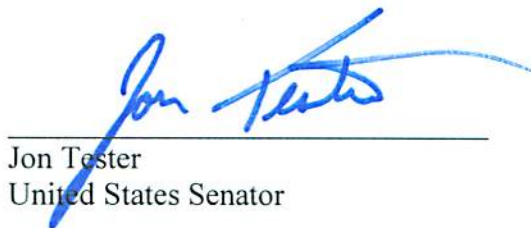
Russell D. Feingold
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Max Baucus
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
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Jon Tester
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Tom Harkin
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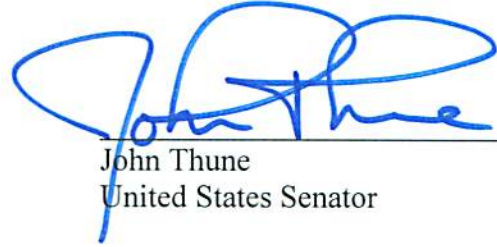


Claire McCaskill
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



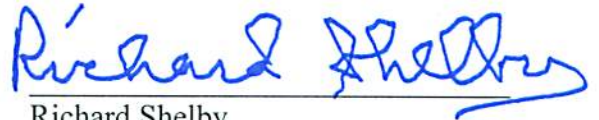
Kent Conrad
United States Senator



John Thune
United States Senator



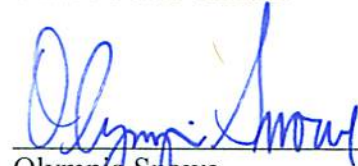
Herb Kohl
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Richard Shelby
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Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Olympia Snowe
United States Senator



E. Benjamin Nelson
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Susan Collins
United States Senator




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