

September 26, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Coalition Urges Opposition to Spartz Amendment (Submitted #113; Rules Print #76) to H.R. 4368

Dear Speaker McCarthy and Leader Jeffries:

The undersigned trade associations, which collectively represent millions of American farmers, ranchers, and foresters; commodity producers, processors, users, and consumers; and state agencies, write today regarding the proposed Spartz Amendment to H.R. 4368, the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2024.

The proposed amendment states:

None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to carry out any program established under a commodity promotion law (as such term is defined in section 501 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (7 U.S.C. 7401)).

This language targets commodity research and promotion boards, better known as “checkoff” programs. Checkoffs were established at the urging of the producers of their respective product. While each individual program operates in a manner uniquely crafted to suit the needs of that specific commodity, generally, a small portion of the sales receipts of that commodity is allocated to a research and promotion board overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Congress has expressed support for these programs multiple times by adopting legislation authorizing checkoffs requested by different producer groups. These programs are entirely funded and directed by those who pay assessments into them—in other words, producers themselves. As such, all checkoff expenses, including the salaries of USDA personnel overseeing them, are funded by the same receipts they generate. There are no taxpayer dollars used to implement checkoffs, and no appropriated dollars are used to oversee. Further, contrary to claims made by proponents of this amendment, checkoffs are regularly audited for transparency and compliance and this amendment would do nothing to increase transparency measures at USDA. We urge opposition to the Spartz Amendment and request a ‘NO’ vote on its adoption.

Research and promotion boards exist to develop new markets and strengthen existing channels for specific commodities while conducting important research and promotional activities. They also work to educate consumers on behalf of a particular commodity to expand total demand to the benefit of all producers. Using the pooled resources and stakeholder investments obtained through checkoff assessments, they promote the product as a whole to create an industry-wide benefit through increased sales, consumer awareness, and higher overall demand both at home and abroad. For every dollar invested into a commodity checkoff, producers see several more in return. Congress should not interfere with these popular, successful programs which benefit U.S. agriculture and natural resources producers.

Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to reach out to our organizations directly with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Almond Alliance
American Beekeeping Federation
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Honey Producers Association
American Mushroom Institute
American Sheep Industry Association
American Soybean Association
American Wood Council
Clean Fuels Alliance America
Corn Refiners Association
International Fresh Produce Association
National All-Jersey
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Christmas Tree Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pecan Federation
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Sorghum Producers
National Watermelon Association
North American Blueberry Council
North American Meat Institute
Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association
Soy Aquaculture Alliance
Soy Transportation Coalition
United Egg Producers
U.S. Peanut Federation

State Organizations

Alabama Cattlemen's Association
Alabama Soybean and Corn Association
American Beekeeping Federation
Arizona Cattle Growers' Association
Arizona Dairy Producers Trade Association
Arkansas Cattlemen's Association
Arkansas Soybean Association
Colorado Cattlemen's Association
Colorado Dairy Farmers
Colorado Livestock Association
Colorado Potato Legislative Association
Dairy Producers of Utah
Empire State Potato Growers
Florida Cattlemen's Association

Georgia Cattlemen's Association
Georgia-Florida Soybean Association
Gulf Coast Watermelon Association
Hawaii Cattle Council
Idaho Cattle Association
Idaho Dairymen's Association
Idaho Grower Shippers Association
Illinois Beef Association
Illinois Milk Producers Association
Illinois Soybean Association
Indiana Beef Cattle Association
Indiana Dairy Producers
Indiana Soybean Alliance
Iowa Cattlemen's Association
Iowa Soybean Association
Iowa State Dairy Association
Kansas Dairy Association
Kansas Livestock Association
Kansas Soybean Association
Kentucky Cattlemen's Association
Kentucky Soybean Association
Louisiana Cattlemen's Association
Louisiana Cotton and Grain Association
Maine Potato Board
Maryland Shorthorn Association
Michigan Cattlemen's Association
Michigan Soybean Association
Mid-Atlantic Soybean Association
Midwest Dairy Coalition
Milk Producers Council
Minnesota Soybean Growers Association
Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association
Mississippi Cattlemen's Association
Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation
Missouri Cattlemen's Association
Missouri Soybean Association
Mississippi Soybean Association
Montana Stockgrowers Association
Nebraska Cattlemen's Association
Nebraska Soybean Association
Nebraska State Dairy Association
Nevada Cattlemen's Association
New Mexico Cattle Growers Association
New York Beef Producers' Association
New York Corn and Soybean Growers Association
North Carolina Cattlemen's Association
North Carolina Soybean Producers Association
North Dakota Soybean Growers Association
North Dakota Stockmen's Association
Northeast Dairy Farmers Cooperatives
Northeast Dairy Producers Association

Northland Potato Growers Association
Ohio Cattlemen's Association
Ohio Dairy Producers Association
Ohio Pork Council
Ohio Soybean Association
Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association
Oklahoma Soybean Association
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association
Potato Growers of Michigan
Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania
South Carolina Cattlemen's Association
South Carolina Corn & Soybean Association
South Dakota Cattlemen's Association
South Dakota Dairy Producers
South Dakota Soybean Association
South East Dairy Farmers Association
Tennessee Cattlemen's Association
Tennessee Soybean Association
Texas Cattle Feeders Association
Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association
Texas Soybean Association
Texas Watermelon Association
Utah Cattlemen's Association
Virginia Cattlemen's Association
Virginia Grain Producers Association
Virginia Soybean Association
Washington Cattlemen's Association
Washington Cattle Feeders Association
Washington State Dairy Federation
Washington State Potato Commission
Western States Dairy Producers Association
Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association
Wisconsin Soybean Association
Wyoming Stock Growers Association