

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Guy Molyneux, Hart Research Associates
DATE: July 24, 2019
RE: Survey on USDA's Proposed Pig Slaughter Regulation Changes

From July 18 to 21, 2019, Hart Research Associates conducted a national survey on USDA's proposed changes to federal regulations regarding pig slaughter establishments on behalf of NELP, Food and Water Watch, ASPCA, and Consumer Federation of America. Interviews were conducted online among a representative national sample of 1,004 adults, with a margin of error of ±3.1 percentage points.

By an overwhelming 28-point margin (64% to 36%), Americans oppose the USDA's proposal to eliminate the speed limit on pig slaughter lines.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has proposed eliminating the current speed limit on pig slaughter lines, which allows killing up to 18 pigs per minute, and allowing an unlimited number of kills per minute. Fully 64% of American adults reject this change, while only 36% express support. Opposition crosses party lines, with solid majorities of Democrats (69%), independents (66%), and Republicans (58%) preferring to keep the current speed limit. Similarly, at least 60% reject the change in every region of the country, in both Trump and Clinton states, and in households with lower, moderate, and higher incomes (see table.)

Eliminating Speed Limit on Pig Kill Lines		
	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>
	%	%
All Adults	36	64
Democrats	31	69
Independents	34	66
Republicans	42	58
Northeast	31	69
South	38	62
Midwest	30	70
West	40	60
2016 Trump States	36	64
2016 Clinton States	35	65
Age 18 to 34	43	57
Age 35 to 49	36	64
Age 50 to 64	32	68
Age 65/over	29	71
Men	43	57
Women	29	71
Less than \$50k	36	64
\$50k to \$100k	33	67
More than \$100k	38	62
Non-college whites	32	68
College-educated whites	35	65

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Women express particularly strong opposition to lifting the speed limit (71% opposed, 41% strongly), as do seniors (71% opposed, 36% strongly), while no identifiable demographic group endorses this proposed regulatory change.

Americans reject two other proposed changes to pig slaughter regulations—reducing the number of government inspectors and allowing companies to design their own food safety testing programs—by even larger margins.

The survey also asks Americans their opinion on two other changes in food safety regulations proposed by USDA regarding the slaughter of pigs. Both changes receive a forceful thumbs-down from the public:

	<u>Favor</u> %	<u>Oppose</u> %
Reduce the number of government inspectors assigned to pig slaughter lines by 40%, and have company employees conduct their inspections instead	27	73
Allow companies to design their own microbiological testing programs to measure food safety, rather than requiring all companies to meet the same standards	30	70

Nearly three-fourths reject the proposal to reduce the number of government inspectors on pig slaughter lines. Democrats (77% opposed), independents (67%), and Republicans (72%) all express strong disagreement with the initiative, as do at least 70% of residents of every region of the country. Seven in 10 also say “no” to letting companies design their own food safety tests, with nearly identical verdicts from Democrats (69% opposed), independents (69%), and Republicans (70%).

Americans also reject the USDA’s case in favor of these regulatory changes by a commanding 22-point margin.

Fully 61% reject the following argument in support of these regulatory changes, in favor of the opponents’ case that they will undermine employee safety, humane treatment of animals, and food safety. The USDA’s case is rejected by majorities of both Democrats (63% to 37%) and Republicans (62% to 38%) and in every region of the country.

Supporters of the regulation changes say these new rules have been demonstrated to provide public health protection at least equivalent to the existing inspection system. In addition, the new system should improve animal welfare. These reforms should also promote innovations in food safety, reduce government costs, and increase the profits earned by pork processing companies (39% agree).

Opponents of the changes say they will endanger both public health and worker safety. Plants that adopted this approach in a pilot program had higher levels of food contamination. Allowing unlimited speeds on slaughtering lines will also mean more employee injuries and less humane treatment of animals. The government shouldn’t put industry profits ahead of employee health and safe food (61% agree).