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January 6, 2010

Senator John Thune  
United States Senate  
493 Russell Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Tim Johnson  
United States Senate  
136 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Johnson & Thune:

As we begin the new year, we're writing on behalf of our 1,000 beef producer members, to express concerns with a few major issues pending in the United States Senate – health care reform, climate change, and antibiotic use in livestock agriculture. During our annual convention in early December, SDCA members passed new resolutions related to these issues and we're concerned of the potentially devastating impact these proposals may have on beef producers.

### **Health Care Reform**

SDCA's modified resolution states:

***AGP-2009-06 -- Health Care***

*Whereas, Farmers and ranchers are concerned about rising health care costs and effects of a federal health care plan; therefore be it*

*Resolved, That SDCA support 100 percent deductibility for health care expenses including insurance premiums; be it further*

*Resolved, that SDCA does not support health care reform that raises federal deficits, limits individuals' choices or mandates coverage.*

As Congress works to reconcile health care bills that were hustled through in the waning days of 2009, SDCA hopes you will remember the hard-working men and women in agriculture who are entrepreneurs and small business owners. As such, we support health care reforms that would lower costs and expand choices for individuals and small groups. However, reform must not place additional burdens on the private sector and taxpayers.

### **Climate Change**

SDCA's new resolution states:

***PREM-2009-00 -- Climate Change***

*Whereas, efforts are underway by the federal government to develop a climate change policy to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions; and*

*Whereas, agriculture offers a readily available, low-cost source of offsets that can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in addition to other environmental and societal benefits that improve air and water quality and enhance wildlife habitat; therefore be it*

*Resolved, SDCA supports the development of accurate greenhouse gas emissions data for domestic cattle production systems based on sound science; be it further*

*Resolved, SDCA supports an effort to define the framework for an agricultural offset program in anticipation of future climate change legislation ensuring that cattle producers would be able to voluntarily participate in an equitable market-based system for greenhouse gas offsets; be it further*

*Resolved, SDCA supports unlimited offsets for agriculture that require recognition and inclusion of practices implemented by early adopters; be it further*

*Resolved, SDCA oppose legislation or regulations that may increase consumer expenses and therefore may decrease consumer demand for animal protein and agricultural products based on an alleged and unsubstantiated amount of greenhouse gas emissions emitted from the domestic livestock industry.*

As we've previously communicated, SDCA is concerned that climate change proposals currently under consideration, including cap and trade, will have a detrimental impact on South Dakota's rural economy and specifically on cattle producers. Higher input costs combined with lower profit margins would be devastating to South Dakota's ag producers and SDCA continues to oppose the unwarranted mandates included in current Climate Change proposals.

### **Antibiotics**

SDCA's revised and renewed resolution states:

***CHW-2009-02 -- Use of Antibiotics in Animal Management***

*Whereas, The benefits of antibiotics in livestock rations can be documented by years of research; and  
Whereas, Theoretical questions have been raised regarding the safety of feeding antibiotics to livestock;  
and*

*Whereas, SDCA recognizes the consumer's right to expect wholesome meat products; and*

*Whereas, SDCA encourages the proper use of antibiotics to maintain the wholesomeness of beef;  
therefore be it*

*Resolved, That SDCA strongly urge and request that any proposed changes in FDA policies regarding the use of antibiotics and approval of new drugs be based on factual research.*

Food safety is an important issue and American ag producers strive to produce the safest, most abundant and cost-effective food supply in the world. As Congress considers proposals to ban or severely limit the use of antibiotics in food animal production, SDCA urges you to use sound science as your guide. In multiple studies, no connection has been found between antibiotic use in cattle and antibiotic-resistant food-borne or other pathogens and industry-established BQA protocols encourage the judicious use of antibiotics as a best management practice.

While there are a number of federal issues pending, we felt it was important to advise you of our new and revised policies relative to these particularly concerning issues. We appreciate your consideration of our views and look forward to working with you to ensure cattlemen can continue to be productive and prosperous in 2010. Please contact Jodie Hickman in our office ([executive@sd cattlemen.org](mailto:executive@sd cattlemen.org) or 605.945.2333) if you have any questions or concerns regarding these policies.

Regards,



Bryan Nagel, President

cc: Representative Stephanie Herseth Sandlin