



FROM: UNITED EGG PRODUCERS

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## **Veterinarians Support Federal Legislation on Eggs**

Alpharetta, GA., Feb. 16, 2012 — The United Egg Producers Association applauds the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the nation's largest association of animal health professionals representing more than 82,500 veterinarians, for its announcement supporting H.R. 3798, the Egg Products Inspection Act Amendments of 2012. The proposed legislation will lead to improvements in housing for 280 million hens involved in U.S. egg production, while providing a stable future for egg farmers.

The bill requires egg farmers to double the space allotted per hen and make other important animal welfare improvements during a tiered phase-in period that allows farmers time to make the investments in enriched colony cage housing, with the assurance that all will face the same requirements by the end of the phase-in period.

The legislation is strongly supported by the United Egg Producers, the national organization that represents egg farmers who produce 88 percent of the nation's eggs. It also is supported by 10 state agricultural groups, the Humane Society of the United States, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and 12 other animal protection groups and the National Consumers League.

"We were extremely pleased to learn about the support of the American Veterinary Medical Association," said Gene Gregory, President and CEO of the United Egg Producers. "We have relied on the animal scientists and specialists to help define the standards for egg laying hens and value the endorsement of the national association of veterinarians."

The AVMA's Executive Board announced its decision this week, saying that the welfare of the animals was the most important factor in its decision to support the legislation.

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AVMA said the legislation is consistent with where the egg industry anticipates it is going, and allows producers ample time to make the capital improvements that might not have been possible under other scenarios. AVMA said that it will work to ensure that implementation of the legislation results in the expected animal welfare improvements, is reasonable, and minimizes any adverse impacts on producers, associated industries, and consumers.

Consumers overwhelmingly support the federal legislation by a margin of 4-to-1, and support the enriched cages by a margin of 12-to-1, according to independent research. Editorial endorsements have come from The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, The (Portland) Oregonian, Green Bay Press Gazette, Tacoma (Washington) News Tribune, Albany (NY) Democrat Herald, San Diego Union Tribune, Statesman (Oregon) Journal and others. It is supported by both Republicans and Democrats.

The bill will preserve American jobs and provide the egg industry with stability in the future. America's national egg sales and distribution system will be maintained, rather than impacted by conflicting and competing state laws.

In recent years, a growing number of states approved often-conflicting standards for egg production, frequently applying those standards to all eggs sold in the state—including those produced out-of-state. As a result, egg farmers have said they foresee an unworkable patchwork of conflicting state. Egg farmers see a federal standard as the only solution that both enhances hen welfare and ensures a sustainable future for America's family-owned egg farms, as well as continuing to provide a wide variety of eggs for consumers to choose from, Gregory said. "This legislation is needed by egg farmers, our customers and consumers," he added.

If enacted, the proposal would require egg producers to increase space per hen in a tiered phase-in, with the amount of space hens are given increasing, in intervals, over the next 15 to 18 years. Hens also would be provided perches, nest boxes and other enrichments which would help them express their natural behaviors.

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*United Egg Producers (UEP) is a Capper-Volstead cooperative for U.S. egg farmers, representing the ownership of approximately 88 percent of the nation's egg-laying hens. UEP members produce eggs using various systems including modern cage production, enriched cages, cage-free, free range, organic and other specialty eggs. For more information about UEP, please go to [unitedegg.org](http://unitedegg.org).*