

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 30, 2013

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20010

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We write regarding the expense of taxpayer dollars on your agency's Office of Catfish Inspection Programs (OCIP). We are concerned about reports of wasteful spending in this office, which, as you know, effectively duplicates the Food and Drug Administration's existing catfish inspection program.

We would particularly like to draw your attention to the troubling news reported by David Kerley for *ABC World News with Diane Sawyer* on August 26, 2013. According to this report, as well as additional information we have received, the OCIP has spent taxpayer dollars on giveaways such as expensive custom pens, insulated lunch bags, tote bags and other unnecessary items.

We have a responsibility to ensure that no taxpayer dollars are going to waste, especially during these difficult economic times. Given that \$20 million has been spent on the OCIP over the past five years while the office has yet to inspect any catfish, we are requesting that you provide confirmation and explanation of OCIP purchase of all such giveaway items.

We look forward to a timely response.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Mark Kirk
United States Senator

CC:

The Hon. Gene L. Dodaro, Comptroller General, U.S. Government Accountability Office
The Hon. Phyllis K. Fong, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Agriculture