

# U.S. Reps. Pocan, Price: Demand protections for meat industry workers

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**MADISON, WI** -With the widespread reports of serious outbreaks of COVID-19 in poultry and meat plants nationwide, Representatives Mark Pocan (D-WI) and David Price (D-NC) sent the following letter to President Donald Trump, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, Labor Secretary Eugene Scalia, and Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar demanding they protect workers in these plants with real workplace standards.

Despite the outbreaks in this industry, President Trump utilized the Defense Production Act to keep meat processing plants open—while refusing to enact any enforceable protections for the workers on the frontlines. Over 3,000 workers in the meat industry have contracted COVID-19 and at least 17 have died. The Trump administration's careless half-measures appear to prioritize profits over the safety of the workers producing them.

“We are once again seeing how the inequities rampant across our society are being exacerbated by this administration's failure to adequately respond to the crisis at hand,” said **Congressman Mark Pocan**. “Better workplace standards and protections are long overdue in this industry where a disproportionate amount of the workers are people of color. Yet, now in the middle of a global pandemic with thousands of COVID-19 cases in this industry, this administration is doubling down on its refusal to protect workers in their workplaces. The sheer concentration of positive cases in these plants demands that testing be made mandatory for all meat processing workers, social distancing be strictly adhered to, and access to PPE be universal. We cannot protect our food supply chains without protecting the works that it relies on.”

“The President’s decision to invoke the Defense Production Act to keep meat processing plants open without adequate personal protective equipment or public health policies places workers at extraordinary risk,” said **Congressman David Price**. “Severe outbreaks across meat processing plants reveal the major deficiencies in protective measures with tragic results. A secure food supply chain depends on the safety and wellbeing of frontline workers who should not have to choose between their health and their work. I urge the administration to implement our recommendations and will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that workers’ health remains a priority.”

Congresswomen Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) also signed the letter.

See the full letter [here](#) and below.