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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Don R

I thought Dept.
were getting out of
peoples hair & ham.

Rep. Daniel Faults Curbs on Curing Hams

Rep. Robert W. Daniel, R-Va., says proposed federal regulations of the Virginia ham industry is a serious matter that could force some producers out of the industry.

"Although it may be possible for some to see humor in a federal bureaucrat challenging a folk tradition that is older than our nation, this is unfortunately a very serious matter that affects the lives and welfare of Virginia citizens," he said.

Daniel sent a letter to Agriculture Secretary Earl L. Butz objecting to the regulations, which are part of a package of new rules dealing with smoke cure hams. He said the other nine Virginia congressmen signed the letter.

The regulations would require a longer curing time, lower temperatures and a larger weight loss during the curing process.

"Few would dare question the ability of a Virginian to produce a country ham, yet, a group of bureaucrats in the Department of Agriculture has presumed to tell Virginians what constitutes a Virginia country ham.

"This action convinces me that nothing is either safe or sacred from the meddling of federal bureaucrats," Daniel said. "For years, Virginians have cured hams in wooden smoke houses on their farms.

"The process used to cure these hams can only be regarded as one of our living folk arts," he said, adding that "anyone who has tasted a Virginia country ham would agree that the end product is infinitely more important than the process used to create it."

The Virginia Meat Packers Association, responding to the USDA regulations, agreed, saying that the end product and not the curing process should be standardized and regulated.

Daniel wrote Butz that if the department has the authority to impose such regulations, "it is clearly outside the realm of reason to establish a policy which will destroy businesses and livelihoods while ending a fine Virginia heritage — the Virginia smoked-country ham."

Sent to DR