

U.S. Supreme Court Swats Away Pork Industry's Latest Challenge to Proposition 12

Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy applaud high court's refusal to undermine landmark animal welfare law

WASHINGTON , DC, UNITED STATES, June 30, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, the U.S. Supreme

“

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*Wayne Pacelle, president of
Animal Wellness Action*

Court declined to accept a petition for certiorari from the Iowa Pork Producers Council, marking the latest—and perhaps final—judicial defeat for the pork industry in its years-long campaign to overturn California's Proposition 12, a landmark animal welfare law banning the sale of pork from pigs confined in cruel, extreme conditions. It is the 19th straight loss in federal court for pork producers and their allies challenging Prop 12 and Prop 2 in California and Question 3 in Massachusetts—all of which dealt with extreme confinement of farm animals.

[Animal Wellness Action](#) and the [Center for a Humane Economy](#) hailed the Court's decision as a resounding

reaffirmation of the right of states to reject products made through inhumane and unsanitary practices. The denial of petition for certiorari means that the ruling in NPPC v. Ross stands as a definitive ruling on the matter from the high court.

“Time and again, the courts have upheld the states' authority to enact carefully constructed laws to stop extreme and immobilizing confinement of farm animals,” said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy. “The pork industry has spent years, and countless millions in the federal courts and Congress and it has not made an inch of progress. It's time for the industry to embrace animal-housing strategies that allow animals to stand up, lie down, and turn around in their pens.”

Proposition 12, passed by California voters in 2018 with 63% support, prohibits the sale of pork, eggs, and veal from animals raised in extreme confinement. Question 3 in Massachusetts, which passed in 2016 with a 78% supermajority, was similarly constructed. The measures took aim at gestation crates for pigs, battery cages for laying hens, and veal crates for young male calves. Neither the egg industry nor the veal industry supported the federal legal and legislative strategies to overturn the laws.

The pork industry has repeatedly attempted to overturn Prop 12, filing lawsuits at every level of the federal judiciary, including the National Pork Producers Council's failed challenge decided in 2023. The Iowa Pork Producers Council then tried to continue the legal assault by filing a separate challenge, only to see that case rejected by a federal district court, then dismissed by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and now finally denied cert by the Supreme Court, putting the matter to rest.

"This is now the ninth major legal defeat for the pork industry in the federal courts over Prop 12," said Kate Schultz, senior attorney at Animal Wellness Action. "Add to this the repeated courtroom losses the industry has experienced in its challenges to California's Prop 2 and Massachusetts's Question 3 and the message is clear: it's time for industry leaders to stop wasting time and resources fighting the law and instead focus on meeting the growing consumer demand for higher welfare standards."

"Congress turned away attempts on both the 2014 and 2018 Farm bills to overturn state laws that protect farm animals, and the latest legislative maneuver has gained very little traction," added Pacelle. "The era of extreme and immobilizing confinement must come to an end, and maybe the pork industry will soon recognize that now that it's hit dead ends in the federal courts and in Congress on the issue."

Below is a summary of legal challenges to Prop 12, Prop 2, and Question 3.

CALIFORNIA'S PROP 2

Cramer v. Harris et al. – egg producer lawsuit against Prop 2

- Oct. 2, 2014 – District Court dismisses the case for lack of standing. Cramer v. Harris, No. CV 12-3130-JFW, 2012 WL 13059699 (C.D. Cal. Sept. 12, 2012)
- Feb. 4, 2015 – United States Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit upholds dismissal.

Missouri v. Harris – six states challenged AB 1437

- June 30, 2014 – District Court dismisses the case for lack of standing. State of Missouri v. Harris, No. 2:14-cv-00341-KJM-KJN (E.D. Cal. Jun. 30, 2014)
- Jan. 17, 2016 – United States Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit upholds dismissal.
- May 30, 2017 – Supreme Court denies cert.

Missouri v. California – similar coalition of states as in the Missouri v. Harris

- Oct. 2, 2014 – District Court dismisses the case for lack of standing. State of Missouri, et al. v. Harris, et al., No. 2:14-cv-00341-KJM-KJN (E.D. Cal. Oct. 2, 2014)
- Nov. 17, 2016 – United States Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit upholds dismissal.
- Jan. 7, 2019 – Supreme Court denies cert.

CALIFORNIA'S PROP 12

North American Meat Institute v. Becerra – meat industry challenge to Proposition 12

- Nov. 22, 2019 – District Court denied NAMI’s request for preliminary injunction.
- Oct. 15, 2020 – United States Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit affirms denial.
- June 28, 2021 – Supreme Court declined to review the denial of NAMI’s requested preliminary injunction.

Natl. Pork Producers Council v. Ross—pork industry challenge to Proposition 12

- April 27, 2020 – District Court for the Southern District of California dismisses plaintiffs’ claims.
- July 28, 2020 – United States Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit affirms lower court dismissal. , 2021 WL 3179247 (9th Cir. July 28, 2021)
- May 11, 2023 – Supreme Court upholds dismissal of the Prop 12 challenge. Nat’l Pork Producers Council v. Ross, 598 U.S. 356 (2023)

Iowa Pork Producers Association v. Bonta—Iowa pork industry challenge to Proposition 12, filed in May 2021

- Aug. 23, 2021 – District Court of the Northern District of Iowa dismisses complaint.
- June 25, 2024 – United States Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit affirms lower court dismissal. (9th Cir. 2024)
- June 30, 2025 – Supreme Court denies cert.

MASSACHUSETT’S QUESTION 3

Massachusetts Restaurant Association v. Healey—pork industry challenge to Question 3

- Aug. 10, 2022 – parties agree to stay action pending outcome of NPPC v Ross. Only remaining issue is “Transshipped Whole Pork Meat” which is pending state amendment of regulations. Civil Action No. 4:22-cv-11245-MRG

Triumph Foods, LLC v Campbell—pork industry challenge to Question 3 claiming preemption under the FMIA

- July 22, 2024 – District Court grants summary judgment to the state upholding Q3. 742 F Supp 3d 63 (D Mass 2024) Appeal pending.

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