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## **N.G.A. OPPOSES MANDATORY NUTRITIONAL LABELING**

**RESTON, Virginia (July 19, 2001)** – The National Grocers Association (N.G.A.) filed comments on Tuesday, July 17, 2001 in opposition to the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) proposal to amend the Federal Meat and Poultry Products Inspection regulations which require mandatory nutritional labeling of the major cuts of single ingredient, raw meat, and poultry products. This nutritional information is to be provided for these products either on their label or at the point of purchase. N.G.A. also strongly opposes FSIS's proposal to require mandatory nutritional labeling on the individual packages of ground or chopped meat and poultry products.

Since 1993, N.G.A. members have been committed to providing voluntary nutritional information for single ingredient, raw meat, and poultry products, as well as ground beef products. N.G.A. has actively promoted compliance within USDA's established guidelines for voluntary nutritional labeling of these products to be posted at the point of service through posters, brochures, pamphlets, labels, and other measures. N.G.A. members are committed to voluntarily providing consumers this nutritional information. In fact, 95% of the respondents to N.G.A.'s member survey on meat and poultry nutritional labeling reported posting the nutrition information.

"N.G.A. strongly encourages FSIS to continue with the existing voluntary program rather than imposing costly, regulatory burdens. FSIS could improve voluntary compliance by making the same free information available to retailers that it plans to make available under the proposed mandatory regulations. N.G.A. would continue and expand its promotion compliance materials to independent retailers," said Tom Wenning, N.G.A. Senior Vice President and General Counsel.

N.G.A. strongly supports the continuation of the current voluntary program because it works well in fulfilling consumer expectations. In fact, retailers report that the primary interest of consumers is in the particular cut of product being selected, serving size or package size, not nutritional information.