



2026 National Animal Law Competitions
Legislative Drafting & Lobbying Competition
Qualifying Round

QUALIFYING ROUND

You are a principal at Meridian Strategies (“Meridian”), a boutique K Street lobbying firm in Washington, D.C. A new coalition has retained Meridian: the Humane and Safe Poultry Plants (HASPP) Coalition. The HASPP Coalition represents an unusual alliance between poultry workers and animal protection advocates. HASPP is jointly led by the Poultry Processing Workers of America, Local 556 (“Local 556”), a union representing approximately 4,100 workers at poultry slaughter and processing plants across several states, and by the Alliance for Humane Slaughter (“AHS”), a national animal protection organization focused on improving the treatment of farmed animals at slaughter. The coalition has tasked you with building congressional support for their shared legislative priority in the Republican-controlled House and the narrowly Democratic Senate.

HASPP has formed its unconventional coalition and retained Meridian to accomplish a singular goal: enact federal legislation that explicitly requires the stunning of poultry before they are shackled and slaughtered. In the U.S., the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA) requires that livestock be stunned and rendered insensible to pain before being shackled, hoisted, and slaughtered. However, the HMSA has been long interpreted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to exclude poultry. As a result, currently the only federal oversight related to the humane treatment of poultry at slaughter occurs through the “good commercial practices” language in regulations under the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA), which is aimed at preventing adulteration of poultry carcasses rather than addressing the welfare of the birds themselves. The vast majority of the more than 9 billion chickens, turkeys, and ducks slaughtered across the country each year are unloaded, inverted, and shackled while conscious before they are hoisted and dipped in electrified stunning baths prior to slaughter.

This job of shackling birds upside down on a moving line is called the “live hang.” When these birds are conscious while being shackled, they can injure the workers who are doing the live hang. Members of Local 556 report that the live hang is among the most dangerous and least desirable jobs in their processing plants. The birds themselves also regularly suffer injuries in the process, including broken legs and wings, and they exhibit stress, fear, pain, and other discomfort from being shackled upside down while conscious. As a result, Local 556 and AHS are aligned in their interests in protecting poultry

slaughterhouse workers and reducing the inhumane treatment of poultry at slaughter by ending the live hang and requiring pre-shackling stunning of poultry covered under the PPIA.

Local 556 and AHS formed the HASPP Coalition after realizing that they shared this goal while independently testifying at a hearing before the legislature for the State of Bliss. The State of Bliss is a small state on the east coast with a population that is a mix of urban and rural and with one large city. The state is responsible for a significant share of the nation's poultry processing. Many of Local 556's members live or work in the State of Bliss and AHS also has significant membership within the state. The political leadership of the State of Bliss is usually blue, but the state's federal delegation is currently purple. The junior U.S. Senator for the State of Bliss is Senator Morgan Bell, a freshman Democrat from Cambria, the largest city in the State of Bliss. The senior U.S. Senator for the State of Bliss is Senator Casey Ellis, a third-term Republican. Senator Ellis is the ranking member on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry. The congressional district with the highest concentration of Local 556 members and poultry processing plants in the State of Bliss is represented by Jordan Hayes, a fourth-term Democrat who also is a member of the House Committee on Agriculture. You believe that Senator Bell may be the best lawmaker to introduce the HASPP Coalition's legislation, but you anticipate that you would need Senator Ellis to at least be neutral on the legislation. You do not yet have a sense of where Representative Hayes might fall on the bill, but you heard from HASPP that Representative Hayes spoke at a Local 556 hall in the district last year. You have not yet met with the relevant staff for any of the three offices, and you do not know how familiar they might be with humane slaughter requirements.

The HASPP Coalition has shared with you that it is encouraged by recent developments that it believes could offer support for the legislation. For example, several large institutional buyers of chicken products have announced procurement preferences for suppliers using slaughter systems that do not involve the live hanging of conscious birds. HASPP also has shared that a handful of large poultry processing facilities have converted voluntarily away from live hanging, including one such facility in the State of Bliss. Unfortunately, HASPP also shared that conversion is expensive and can cost two to four million dollars or more per poultry slaughter line. As a result, HASPP thinks that the majority of the industry will not convert their lines without a federal requirement. HASPP has expressed its concern to you about potential political backlash from the poultry integrator industry, especially the National Poultry Council ("NPC"), which is a powerful industry trade association. Because grocery store prices for poultry products have gone up over the past few years, there is political sensitivity around anything that might raise prices, and the NPC has managed to kill recent welfare proposals by characterizing them as mandates that would raise prices for consumers. On the flip side, HASPP also believes that contract growers, the independent producers who do the work of raising the birds for the large poultry integrators, could be potential allies. As a result, HASPP has instructed you to avoid any negative comparison with, or disparagement of, contract poultry growers, plant workers' employers (the poultry integrators, who own the processing facilities), or the poultry industry in general.

The HASPP Coalition has tasked you with drafting legislation that will be a marker bill for inclusion in the next Farm Bill. Through that legislation, HASPP would like to accomplish two goals to reduce workers' handling of poultry at slaughter and improve the humane treatment of such poultry:

1. Ensure that poultry are covered by federal humane slaughter requirements, including a requirement that birds be rendered insensible to pain before shackling, hoisting, or cutting, enforceable by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
 - a. Do not mandate the use of any specific stunning technology or equipment.
 - b. Make reasonable accommodation for small plants and religious slaughter.
2. Provide reasonable incentives that will help reduce opposition from the poultry industry.

You are instructed to:

1. Draft a federal bill that would accomplish the HASPP Coalition's objectives. (Note: you may use U.S. state or federal laws or bills to guide your research. You also may refer to any existing judicial opinions and resources from any bar association.)
2. Create a fact sheet for your bill. At a minimum, it should explain the current gap in federal law for poultry treatment at the time of slaughter and why it matters, as well as describe what your bill would accomplish.

Your bill will be S.X, with a number assigned after introduction.

The length of your bill shall be no less than one (1) page and no more than five (5) pages. Competitors should determine proper formatting based on their own research; however, font size must be no smaller than 12-point Times New Roman font type with one-inch page margins. Inclusion of "findings" or "purpose" at the beginning of the bill is discretionary and will be included in the final page count.

The fact sheet must be no more than one (1) page and one (1) side in length with the same style requirements as set forth above for the bill.

Please consult the Legislative Drafting & Lobbying Competition Rules for further information, particularly around the use of any AI or AI-enabled tools.