

Minnesota Safe Workplaces for Meat and Poultry Processing Workers Act (HF 800)

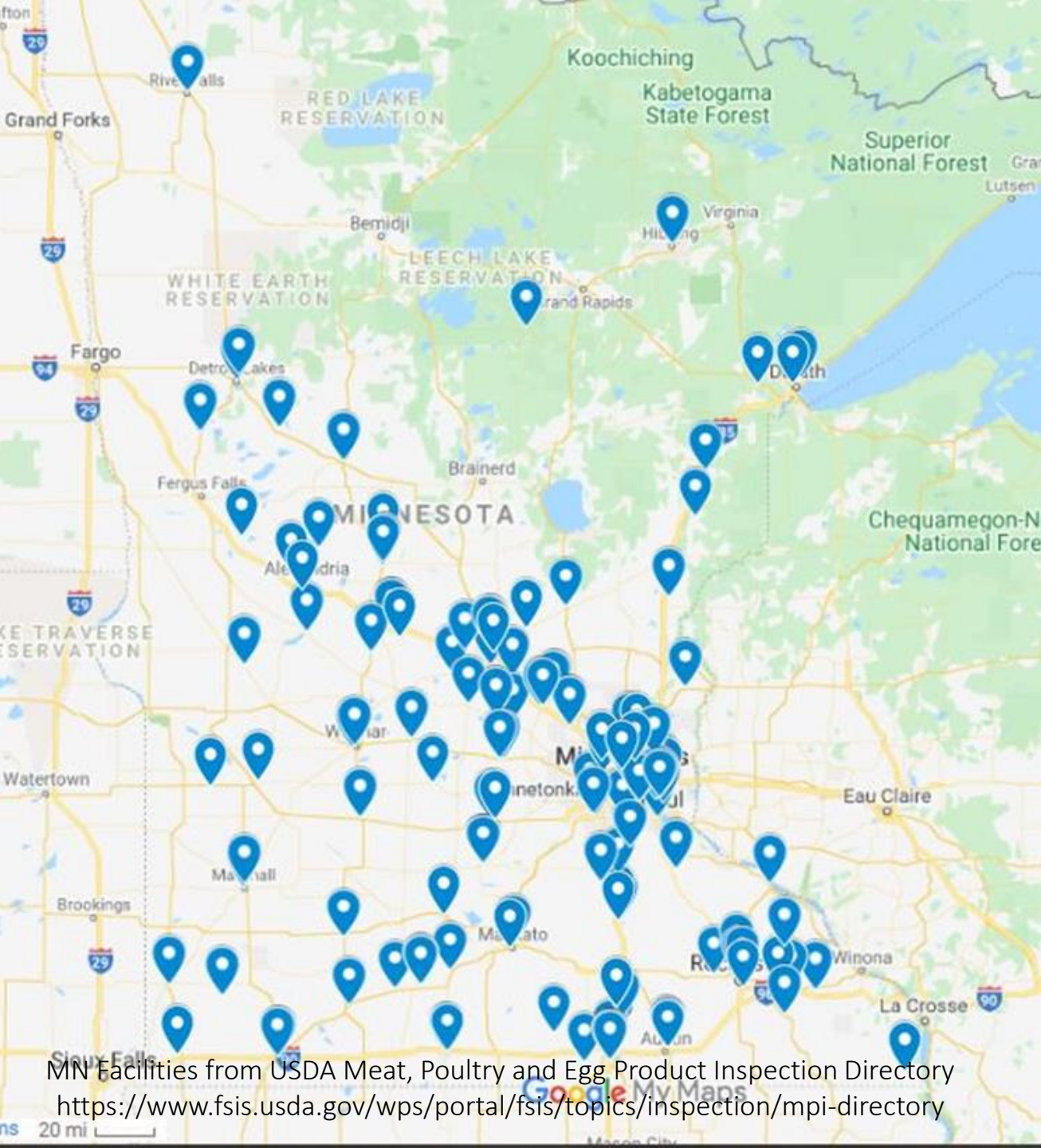


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What Came Before

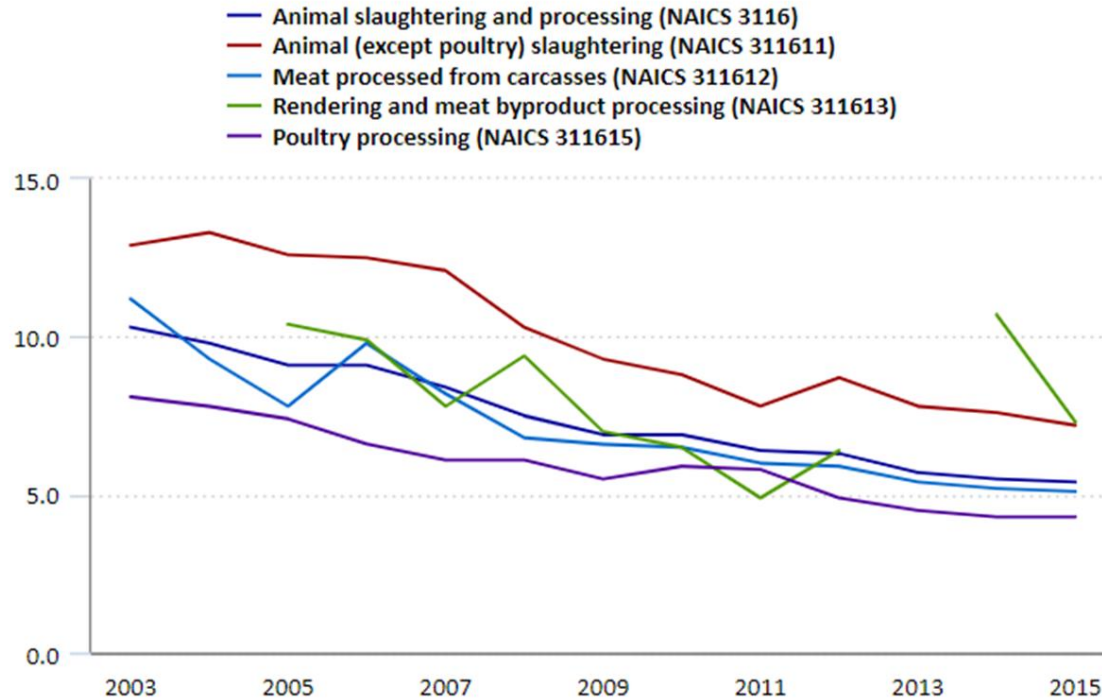
- 2007: Packinghouse Workers Bill of Rights enacted
- 2015: Legislative Auditor's Office assessed the impact and found:
 - Law was mostly symbolic and restatement of existing laws
 - Major innovation was requiring employers to provide certain information to workers in their "native language"
 - DLI has not adequately publicized existence of Workers Bill of Rights.
- Packinghouse Workers Bill of Rights not enough to protect the safety and rights of meatpacking workers, during the COVID-19 pandemic.



MN Facilities from USDA Meat, Poultry and Egg Product Inspection Directory
<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/inspection/mpi-directory>

Meatpacking is Unsafe for Workers

Figure 1. Incidence rates for total recordable cases of occupational injuries and illnesses in the animal slaughtering and processing industry, 2003-15



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.
Note: NAICS = North American Industry Classification System.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In 2015, the animal slaughtering and processing industry reported 26,600 nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses across the entire country.

The rate of total recordable cases per 100 full-time workers was 5.4, higher than the rate for all private industry (3.0) and manufacturing (3.8).

From 2011 to 2015, 73 workers were fatally injured in this industry.

COVID-19 Impact on Meatpacking Industry in Minnesota



- The pandemic highlighted the pre-existing health and safety issues in meatpacking.
- Stearns County became a COVID hotspot due to an outbreak at a Pilgrim's Pride meat processing plant in the county.
- Workers given inadequate PPE, no paid sick leave and encouraged to come into work sick.

Minnesota Safe Workplaces for Meat and Poultry Processing Workers Act

- Provides comprehensive workplace health and safety protections, ensures access to training on how to work safely during the pandemic and beyond.
- Creates a “Workers’ Rights Coordinator” position housed within the Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) dedicated to enforcement and compliance.



Legislative History

- HF 800 was introduced on 2/20
- Authored by Representative Wolgamott (DFL) from St. Cloud
- The House held three committee hearings and heard from workers and other stakeholders.
- Amended bill to apply to large processors with 50 or more employees.
- The proposal was adopted into the workforce omnibus package but failed to make it into the final version.



Pass the Safe Workplaces for Meat and Poultry Processing Workers Act

- The committee should recommend passage of the Minnesota Safe Workplaces for Meat and Poultry Processing Workers Act
- Union Difference: Meat processing plants that have union representation were able to negotiate better COVID safety measures than their non-union counterparts.

