



March 16, 2023

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

RE: The ASPCA calls for immediate action to protect dogs from government-sanctioned cruelty

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

Last summer, animal lovers across the nation were captivated by the rescue of 4,000 beagles from a mass breeding facility in Virginia that supplied dogs for experimentation. According to reports, countless dogs suffered and died at Envigo's facility while the USDA, the government agency responsible for protecting dogs at commercial breeding facilities, turned a blind eye.

Equally disturbing is Reuters' recent report that senior leaders at USDA went to great lengths to cover up Envigo's unlawful actions. Inspectors were directed to delete content from their reports, denied the resources needed to inspect the massive facility appropriately, and the team leader supervising the investigation was removed without explanation. In response to complaints from USDA inspectors frustrated with leadership's stonewalling, the Department of Justice stepped in to sue Envigo and negotiate the release of the beagles.

The USDA's mishandling of Envigo was so egregious that some of its leaders were subpoenaed by the Department of Justice to appear before a grand jury to answer for their role in the suffering and death of thousands of dogs.

We cannot stand by while dogs are harmed and killed under the watch of a taxpayer-funded agency that has failed abysmally to fulfill its mandate to assure their welfare.

We call on you to:

- Immediately launch an investigation and terminate USDA staff found to be complicit in impeding inspections, investigations, and enforcement against Envigo, or any misconduct related to covering up violations of the Animal Welfare Act.

We ask Congress to:

- Pass Goldie's Act, legislation named after a Golden retriever who suffered and died at the hands of another USDA licensee. Goldie's Act would require the USDA to take animal welfare violations seriously, intervene when animals are suffering, and ensure action is taken against those who violate the law.

- Appoint an independent office of oversight to ensure that animals are protected as required by law, and to provide Congress with regular updates on the Agency's handling of licensure, inspections, enforcement, and confiscations so that government is not again party to such extreme animal suffering.

Sincerely,

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Cc: Members of Congress