



NATIONAL CONSUMERS LEAGUE PRESS RELEASE

## National Consumers League Calls on Labor Secretary to Investigate Allegations of Child Labor Violations in Kosher Slaughterhouse

National Consumers League Media Alert, June 4, 2008

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Washington, DC— The National Consumers League, the nation's oldest consumer advocacy organization, has called on the Department of Labor to investigate alleged child labor violations at the Agriprocessors kosher slaughterhouse in Postville, Iowa, which was raided by federal immigration officers on May 12. The letter to Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao, written by NCL's Reid Maki, Director of Social Responsibility and Fair Labor Standards and coordinator of the Child Labor Coalition, follows:

*Dear Madame Secretary:*

*I am the coordinator of the Washington-based Child Labor Coalition, a coalition of 30 organizations that have coalesced to fight abusive child labor here and abroad. The coalition has been operated by the National Consumers League, the nation's oldest consumer advocacy group, for the last 19 years.*

*It has come to our attention that children and teens were allegedly working in the Agriprocessors Postville, Iowa slaughterhouse raided by agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on May 12, 2008. According to the office of Senator Tom Harkin, some 18 children and teens are believed to have been employed in the plant when it was raided.*

*The members of the Child Labor Coalition are concerned about the presence of children working in slaughterhouses, which are known to be among the most dangerous workplaces in America. It is our understanding that the Pottsville plant has a long history of violating U.S. labor law. We urge your office to investigate fully the possibility that minors were employed in the Postville plant. We would hope that your office would confirm the extent of the child labor employment and determine the specific jobs the young workers were asked to perform. We believe the Department should assess the danger of those employment tasks and whether the youth were subjected to abusive treatment.*

*We are also concerned that the ICE raid appears not to have been coordinated with the Department of Labor. The ICE arrests and the movement of key witnesses may jeopardize the Department of Labor's ability to fully and effectively investigate whether child labor was occurring at the plant. In our view, the question of whether undocumented workers are employed in a factory should never come in the way of the very serious possibility that plant owners may be violating child labor laws and risking the health of young workers.*

*We respectfully ask you to investigate the child labor allegations at the Agriprocessors plant and prosecute any violations of child labor law to the fullest extent possible. As the coordinator of the Child Labor Coalition, I would like to extend an invitation to you and your representatives to present the findings of your investigation to the members of the Coalition at an upcoming meeting. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in any event.*

*Sincerely,*

*Reid Maki*

*Coordinator, Child Labor Coalition*

*Director, Social Responsibility*

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#### **About NCL**

The National Consumers League, founded in 1899, is America's pioneer consumer organization. Our mission is to protect and promote social and economic justice for consumers and workers in the United States and abroad. For more information, visit [www.nclnet.org](http://www.nclnet.org).