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Out-of-State Activists Defeat the Oklahoma Beef Checkoff Referendum

Oklahoma City, OK, November 9, 2017 – Today, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (ODAFF) announced the refundable Oklahoma Beef Checkoff referendum failed with 2,506 no votes and 1,998 yes votes.

“As a rancher, I face challenges every day,” said Weston Givens, rancher and President of the Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Association. “Unfortunately, those daily challenges are nothing compared to the growing challenges that our industry faces such as: aggressive anti-meat activist groups trying to remove beef from the menu and misleading claims about food safety and animal care. It is disheartening that the Oklahoma Beef Checkoff was defeated, but I’m still proud of the strong collaborative effort of the Vote Yes Coalition and our grassroots campaign.”

“This is an unfortunate loss for the beef industry here in Oklahoma,” said Michael Kelsey, Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Association Executive Vice President. “Investing in a state-level beef checkoff would have greatly increased the opportunities to market, promote and educate consumers about beef and beef producers. We ran a good campaign that worked hard to reach out and educate beef producers, but ultimately we were defeated today by the same out-of-state activists that defeated State Question 777 last fall.”

Voting was conducted by early ballot, between October 2-20, and in-person voting on November 1st at County Extension Offices. All ballots were received, tabulated, verified and sampled by a third-party auditor and delivered directly to the Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture, Jim Reese. Eligible voters included all Oklahoma beef producers and those who would be required to pay the one-dollar assessment.

Texas most recently adopted the state level checkoff in 2014 by two-thirds with 7,080 Texas producers voting. This defeat follows the defeat of the 2013 Texas Grain Indemnity fund referendum. In that referendum 507 voted in failure and 1,687 voted against.

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