

# WORC

*Western Organization of Resource Councils*

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**For more information, contact:** Gilles Stockton, 406-428-2183; Kevin Dowling, WORC staff; or Jeri Lynn Bakken, WORC staff, 701-376-7077.

## **Ag Secretary Gets Earful on Animal Identification Program**

*Montana rancher says Agriculture Department lacks credibility in cattle country*

**Washington, D.C.** – A range of representatives of the livestock industry, including Gilles Stockton with the Western Organization of Resource Councils, participated in a roundtable discussion on the proposed National Animal Identification System (NAIS) with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on April 15.

“The Department of Agriculture’s pronouncements on why producers need NAIS have changed so often that we are completely confused,” Stockton said. “NAIS has been described as a marketing program, a food safety program, a homeland security program, and a disease control and eradication program.

“NAIS is a program lacking clarity and logic,” he said. “For those of us raising cattle on the western rangelands, it does not appear to have any value added. USDA’s attempts to force NAIS on livestock producers are scandalous. USDA’s manipulation of our children by requiring NAIS for FFA and 4-H has not been well received in the country.

“You have inherited a department with very little credibility,” Stockton told Vilsack. “I hope you will be able to restore the department to a position that it serves agricultural producers and consumers as it was originally intended.”

Vilsack said the department is scheduling listening sessions and will provide more opportunities to comment on NAIS.

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*Based in Billings, Mont., WORC is a network of conservation and family agriculture organizations in Colorado, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Wyoming.*