The PIGS Act
Ending the use of extreme confinement of mother pigs

What Does the Pigs in Gestation Stalls (PIGS) Act Do?

This bill would ban the use of gestation stalls (also known as “crates”) for housing pregnant pigs and require that they have at least 36 square feet of space and the ability to lie down, stand up, and turn around freely. The two-foot by seven-foot crates currently used in the industry are so restrictive that pregnant pigs are essentially immobilized – sadly, they spend most of their lives kept in these horrific conditions. By forbidding this extreme form of confinement, Congress will level the playing field for all producers (nearly a dozen states restrict the practice and dozens of retailers have pledged to buy pork only from crate-free operations) and give consumers more confidence about the pig industry’s animal welfare standards.

Why Support the PIGS Act?

Keeping Pregnant Pigs in Extreme Confinement is Inhumane
A breeding pig may spend up to three years intensively confined in a crate, and that’s the bulk of her entire lifespan. A pig can weigh 400 pounds, and the two-foot wide crate immobilizes her for months on end. The Humane Methods of Slaughter Act stipulates that pigs must be rendered insensible to pain prior to slaughter, and it only makes sense to have humane treatment standards for these animals for the duration of their lives. Pigs raised for meat are not kept in these needlessly restrictive crates, and neither should pregnant pigs.

Major Retailers are Moving Away from Extreme Confinement
Almost every major food retailer in the United States – from McDonald’s to Costco to Aramark – has agreed to phase out all purchasing of pork from farms that confine sows in gestation crates, with most policies taking effect in 2022. Smithfield Foods, the nation’s largest pig producer, has phased out gestation crate confinement in its company-owned operations due to consumer demand, and Hormel, Cargill, and other major producers have made similar commitments. A report from Citigroup said that animal cruelty is a “headline risk” for restaurant companies. Additionally, a study from scientists at Iowa State University concluded that humane group housing alternatives allow for successful reproduction and cost less to build and maintain; the study points to an 11 percent reduction in the cost of raising a weaned pig.

Voters Care About Farm Animal Welfare, and It’s Trending Nationally & Globally
In four states, voters approved bans on the use of extreme confinement: Arizona, California (two separate ballot initiatives), Florida and Massachusetts. Major pig-producing states, including Colorado, Michigan, and Ohio, are phasing out gestation crates by law. Two states – California and Massachusetts, with 50 million customers between them – are also forbidding the sale of pork that is derived from farms that use crates by 2022. This means that every restaurant, supermarket, and other food-selling outlets must adhere to this sales standard. The EU also bans gestation crates, and the U.S. is clearly moving in that direction. This bill will provide regulatory certainty to producers as they make investments in new housing systems.