



Consumer Federation of America

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Consumer Federation of America Urges House to Pass Food Safety Enhancement Act

Consumer Federation of America today urged the House of Representatives to pass H.R. 2749, the Food Safety Enhancement Act. Passage of this bill is critical to repair our broken food safety system and rebuild trust in food businesses and the government.

Each year, 76 million Americans are sickened, 325,000 are hospitalized and 5,000 die after eating contaminated food. On average, that is one death every two hours. Such a toll is simply unacceptable. Foodborne illness outbreaks – from a variety of contaminated products such as spinach, canned chili, pot pies, peppers, peanuts, pistachios and cookie dough – have resulted in a plummeting of consumer confidence. A recent poll by IBM showed that a majority of Americans are concerned about the safety of the food they purchase while less than 20 percent trusted food companies to develop and sell food products that are safe.

Congress now has the opportunity to pass legislation that will reform our broken food safety system. Tomorrow, H.R. 2749 will be on the floor of the House of Representatives. The bill will provide the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) with the authority and resources it needs to better protect American consumers from dangerous and unsafe food. Specifically, the bill will:

- Require increased inspections of food facilities;
- Require food companies to develop food safety plans designed to prevent contamination of food products;
- Provide FDA with the authority to order a recall if a company fails to do so when requested;
- Require food companies to provide FDA with access to food safety records;
- Require domestic and foreign food processing facilities to register with the FDA and pay an annual fee of \$500, to help fund the cost of needed increased food safety activities.
- Require that FDA develop a system that allows the agency to trace food to its source quickly; and
- Increase fines and penalties for violators of the law.

Further, the bill's sponsors have worked hard to address issues raised by small farmers and sustainable agriculture groups to assure that FDA take into account small diversified, organic and environmental considerations in establishing safety standards.

Food safety provisions in the bill have been well vetted through the legislative process in a series of hearings and investigations over the course of several years. The bill was passed out of the Energy and Commerce Committee without objection on a voice vote, with participation and support of both parties. It is now time for the full House of Representatives to take action and pass H.R. 2749 and begin repairing our food safety system.

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Consumer Federation of America is a non-profit association of over 300 organizations, with a combined membership of over 50 million Americans. CFA's Food Policy Institute was created in 1999 and engages in research, education and advocacy on food and agricultural policy, agricultural biotechnology, food safety and nutrition.