



For Immediate Release
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Media Contacts Listed
Below

SENATE DEMOCRATS & REPUBLICANS, FOOD INDUSTRY AND CONSUMER GROUPS TO WHITE HOUSE: UNDER FUNDED FDA JEOPARDIZES FOOD SAFETY

*Senator Durbin and Colleagues in Letter to White House Push for
Critical FDA Funding Increase*

(Washington, D.C.) – At a press conference in the U.S. Capitol, Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today was joined by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA), the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), the American Frozen Food Institute (AFFI), the Coalition for a Stronger FDA and FDA Alliance, the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), and the Consumer Federation of America (CFA) in calling on the White House to increase FDA’s food safety resources. Also today, in a letter to President Bush with cosigners from both sides of the aisle, Senator Durbin urged the President to recognize the importance of this issue by proposing a significant funding increase for FDA’s Foods Program in the FY09 Budget.

“For years, Congress has pointed out that the FDA is understaffed and under funded,” said Senator Durbin. “Now, the FDA’s own science advisors admit the agency is failing at its mission. The only good news is that these reports may give us the momentum we need to change. I am calling on the Administration to commit to doubling FDA funding over the next five years. We simply cannot leave American families vulnerable when it comes to food safety.”

Last week, a subcommittee of the FDA’s Science Board released a pivotal report detailing how under funding of the FDA is jeopardizing the agency’s ability to protect the food supply. Specifically, the report found that FDA is woefully under funded and unable to do its job due to soaring demands on the Agency; and resources that have not increased in proportion to those demands.

“We need comprehensive preventive measures, effective surveillance, and robust authority for FDA to take action where needed to protect lives,” said Senator Kennedy. “There’s no mystery to how to improve food safety. The Europeans have a strong system, and so do the Japanese. I am working with my colleagues on the health committee and throughout the Senate on comprehensive bipartisan legislation to protect the food supply – and this proposal ought to be the first order of business for the Senate in the new year.

“The nature of our food supply is evolving more rapidly than ever before, and the food industry is adapting in order to provide consumers with abundant, safe and affordable food,” said GMA President and CEO Cal Dooley. “In order to adequately protect the food supply and restore consumer confidence in our nation’s food safety net, Congress and the Bush Administration must

provide FDA with the resources it needs to modernize the agency and allow it to properly fulfill its food safety mission.”

“Just like we wouldn't send the cavalry to fight a modern war, we should not allow the FDA to continue to use out-of-date tools to manage a global food supply,” said Caroline Smith DeWaal, food safety director for the Center for Science in the Public Interest. “The latest report from the FDA Science Board says that FDA's food program is in critical condition. The proof of the report is in the number of food outbreaks and recalls over the last 16 months. Preventing illnesses and outbreaks takes money. Without it, millions of consumers are at increased risk of becoming ill from something they eat.”

“The FDA continues to receive less and less resources and more and more responsibility,” said William Hubbard, FDA Coalition spokesperson. “The Institute of Medicine has concluded FDA needs more funding, the FDA's own advisors now conclude FDA is in critical shape because of lack of funding, and now we need the Administration and Congress to come to that same conclusion and provide more resources.”

“The capable and dedicated professionals at FDA would certainly benefit from increased funding for essential food safety programs,” said Tim Hammonds, president and CEO, FMI. “Because of extensive experience with the rapidly evolving food safety challenges facing our nation, FDA's leadership can be a valuable resource for helping to decide just how this additional funding can be best targeted and allocated.”

“Consumers expect the FDA to be able to assure that the food on their plates is safe,” said Chris Waldrop, Director of the Food Policy Institute at Consumer Federation of America. “Without adequate resources, the FDA is unable to meet those expectations, and consumers are put at unnecessary risk. We urge Congress and the Administration to significantly increase the FDA's funding so that it has the resources it needs to protect our food supply.”

“The proposed increase that we seek will assist the FDA in developing new strategies, as well as continue important work in the areas of regulatory enforcement, monitoring and inspection, international harmonization, science-based oversight, foreign food safety assessments and technical assistance, and trade,” said American Frozen Food Institute President and Chief Executive Officer Leslie G. Sarasin. “These efforts are intended to enable the agency to remain an effective force in resolving issues bearing on the safety, quality, and labeling of foods and other products.”

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About GMA

The Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) represents the world's leading food, beverage and consumer products companies. The association promotes sound public policy, champions initiatives that increase productivity and growth and helps to protect the safety and security of the food supply through scientific excellence. The GMA board of directors is comprised of chief executive officers from the association's member companies. The \$2.1 trillion food, beverage and consumer packaged goods industry employs 14 million workers, and contributes over \$1

trillion in added value to the nation's economy. For more information, visit the GMA Web site at www.gmaonline.org. **Media contact Scott Openshaw 202.295.3957 or Brian Kennedy 202.639.5994**

About the FDA Alliance and the Coalition for a Stronger FDA

In response to the unmet resource needs of the FDA and the threat this poses to America's health, safety and commerce, two organizations were formed in 2006 to educate and advocate about the importance of FDA and the need for better funding. Both the FDA Alliance and the Coalition for a Stronger FDA bring together consumer and patient groups, professional organizations, trade associations, companies and individuals. More about each group can be found on their respective websites: www.StrengthenFDA.org (FDA Alliance) and www.FDACoalition.org (Coalition for a Stronger FDA). **Media contact Ladd Wiley 202.887.4000**

About FMI

Food Marketing Institute (FMI) conducts programs in research, education, industry relations and public affairs on behalf of its 1,500 member companies — food retailers and wholesalers — in the United States and around the world. FMI's U.S. members operate approximately 26,000 retail food stores with a combined annual sales volume of \$680 billion — three-quarters of all retail food store sales in the United States. FMI's retail membership is composed of large multi-store chains, regional firms and independent supermarkets. Its international membership includes 200 companies from more than 50 countries. **Media contact Claudia Peters 202.452.8444 or Bill Greer 202.220.0667**

About CSPI

The Center for Science in the Public Interest is a nonprofit health-advocacy group based in Washington, DC, that focuses on nutrition, food safety, and pro-health alcohol policies. CSPI is supported by the 850,000 U.S. and Canadian subscribers to its *Nutrition Action Healthletter* and by foundation grants. **Media contact Jeff Cronin 202.332.9110**

About CFA

Consumer Federation of America (CFA) is a nonprofit association of 300 consumer groups, representing more than 50 million Americans, that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, education and advocacy. For more information, visit the CFA website at www.consumerfed.org. **Media contact Chris Waldrop 202.797.8551**

About AFFI

The American Frozen Food Institute (AFFI) is the national trade association that promotes and represents the interests of all segments of the frozen food industry. AFFI fosters industry development and growth, advocates on behalf of the industry before legislative and regulatory entities, and provides additional value-added services for its members and for the benefit of consumers. AFFI members manufacture and distribute frozen foods throughout the United States and globally and are committed to ensuring that these products are produced in accordance with strict standards of safety and quality. For more information, please visit the website at www.affi.com. **Media contact Jorge Martinez, 703.821.0770**