



Consumer Federation of America

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CFA Applauds Introduction of the Safe Meat and Poultry Act

Consumer Federation of America expressed support today for the Safe Meat and Poultry Act, which was introduced by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). The legislation will strengthen the authority of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) to better assure the safety of meat and poultry products and protect consumers from foodborne illness.

"Consumers continue to get sick from contaminated meat and poultry," said Chris Waldrop, director of the Food Policy Institute at the Consumer Federation of America. "We must provide FSIS with the modern tools and authorities necessary to ensure the safety of these products."

The bill would provide FSIS with the ability to better oversee the safety of meat and poultry products. Specifically, the bill:

- Makes clear that any meat and poultry products which contain pathogens would be considered adulterated under the law;
- Provides the agency with the explicit authority to set and enforce pathogen reduction performance standards;
- Requires companies to test for pathogens;
- Requires FSIS to trace back contaminated food to the original source of contamination;
- Provides FSIS authority to issue civil and criminal penalties for violations of food safety requirements; and
- Provides FSIS new authority to require companies to recall adulterated food.

"Modernizing our meat and poultry inspection system is essential to help prevent foodborne illness and to improve consumer confidence in the safety of our food supply," Waldrop said. "CFA looks forward to working with Senator Gillibrand and other members of Congress on this important legislation."

Foodborne illness from meat and poultry products remains a serious public health problem. A [report](#) by the University of Florida found that a significant proportion of the foodborne disease burden in the United States can be attributed to pathogens associated with meat and poultry products. Outbreaks linked to [antibiotic-resistant strains](#) of *Salmonella* highlight the importance of assuring that FSIS has the necessary tools to address emerging problems. Furthermore, several court decisions have issued rulings, based on outdated understandings of the risk and nature of

foodborne pathogens, which have imposed barriers to effective and reasonable oversight of meat and poultry products.

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Consumer Federation of America is an association of nearly 300 nonprofit consumer organizations that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, advocacy and education.