



Consumer Federation of America

CFA APPEALS TO THE SENATE, “FIX FOOD SAFETY LAW BEFORE LEAVING WASHINGTON” *Statement of CFA’s Carol Tucker-Foreman*

Good morning. I am Carol Tucker-Foreman, Distinguished Fellow in Food Policy at Consumer Federation of America. Thank you for coming.

The groups represented here today don’t always agree about food and nutrition policy. We don’t usually work together to pass legislation. We have joined forces today because we do agree that the burden of foodborne illness in the U.S. is far too great. We agree that millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations, 5,000 deaths and \$152 billion each year as the result of diseases that are almost always preventable is an intolerable toll.

We know the problems could be substantially reduced by changing the way the Food and Drug Administration addresses food safety problems, by giving the Agency a mandate and the tools to prevent foodborne illness rather than waiting around until thousands of people are sick from contaminated peanut butter, spinach, tomatoes, and eggs.

S. 510 changes FDA’s food safety paradigm. It shifts the agency’s mandate from reaction to prevention. It requires companies to create and maintain preventive process controls, imposes new safety requirements on imported food, requires the Agency to inspect companies regularly. If all else fails, the bill gives the FDA power to recall contaminated products that get into the market place. The legislation has been considered and perfected for almost two years. The House passed it 13 months ago. The Senate HELP Committee has amended it to respond to concerns raised by small businesses and farms and to reduce the overall cost of the bill. The bill has strong bipartisan support.

Supporters of S. 510 have waited patiently for many months now for this noncontroversial bill to reach the Senate floor. Beginning in March, there have been indications that Senate leaders intended to bring the bill to the floor before the next break. Each time S. 510 has been set aside to address something deemed more important. Last week Senate leaders suggested it is now impossible to get the bill to the floor before the elections. We sincerely hope that Senate leaders will reconsider.

Today, we appeal to the Senate to act now to debate and pass S. 510. The stakes are very high. Each day that passes brings news of more outbreaks, more illnesses and more recalls. In the 13 months since the House passed FDA reform legislation, the Agency has had 85 recalls. Nine of the recalls involved illnesses. The FDA is currently dealing with contaminated eggs that have caused over 1,500 illnesses. We ask the Senate leaders, please do not leave town for the re-election campaign before addressing this very serious public health problem. We ask each Senator to convey to leaders of both parties the urgency of acting now, before the elections. We say to every American—call your Senators and ask them to stay in Washington until they have passed legislation to make our food safe. So many lives depend on your leadership.

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Consumer Federation of America is an association of nearly 300 nonprofit consumer groups established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, advocacy, and education. CFA's Food Policy Institute, founded in 1999, promotes rational, equitable and responsible food and agricultural policies that assure all Americans have access to an adequate supply of safe and nutritious food at reasonable prices. CFA supports food and nutrition assistance programs that provide aid to those among us who cannot afford an adequate diet at any price. Hon. Carol L. Tucker-Foreman is distinguished fellow at the Food Policy Institute. From 1977-81 she was assistant secretary for food and consumer services at USDA with responsibility for all of USDA's food and nutrition assistance programs, meat, poultry and egg product inspection programs and food grading.