

# SAFE FOOD COALITION

1620 I Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006 202-797-8551

---

November 14, 2006

The Honorable Michael Enzi  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
428 Senate Dirken Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Enzi:

The undersigned members of the Safe Food Coalition strongly object to the lack of consumer and victim representation at tomorrow's Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions hearing on "Food Safety: Current Challenges and New Ideas to Safeguard Consumers."

The Safe Food Coalition consists of consumer groups, groups representing victims of foodborne illness, and union organizations dedicated to reducing the burden of foodborne illness in the United States. Our members have been particularly active on the spinach-related *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreak, which we understand to be the main focus of your hearing.

According to the witness list for tomorrow's hearing, the Committee will hear from members of federal and state government and members of the food industry. Yet those who have been affected most personally, whose health and safety have been put at risk, will have no representation at this hearing. The spinach-related *E. coli* outbreak killed at least three people and sickened over 200 people. Consumers had to stop eating spinach for a period of time and were deeply concerned about the safety of produce in general. Yet neither representatives from victims of the spinach outbreak nor consumers have been invited to testify at this hearing.

We object to this lack of representation and urge you to include all stakeholders in hearings such as these. Consumers and victims of foodborne illness represent a unique and valuable perspective on issues of food safety and the Committee would be well-served to consider their viewpoint when developing these hearings.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Caroline Smith DeWaal  
Center for Science in the Public Interest

Chris Waldrop  
Consumer Federation of America

Susanna Montezemolo  
Consumers Union

Wenonah Hauter  
Food & Water Watch

Jacqueline Ostfeld  
Government Accountability Project

Alison Rein  
National Consumers League

Barb Kowalczyk  
Safe Tables Our Priority

Michael J. Wilson  
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union

CC: Senator Edward Kennedy, Ranking Member  
Senator Richard Durbin  
Senator Tom Harkin  
Senate HELP Committee Members