



S.T.O.P. - Safe Tables Our Priority

America's Voice for Safe Food

3759 N. Ravenswood, Suite 224, Chicago, IL 60613 | Phone: 773.269.6555 | www.safetables.org

Victim Advocates Give Food Safety Bill a Final Grade of "C-"

Contact: Nancy Donley (773) 419-0128
Kathleen Chrismer (702) 326-6673

December 21, 2010 (Chicago, IL) - S.T.O.P. expresses its thanks to the United States Congress for passing H.R. 2751, the long-awaited FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (formerly known as S. 510). While S.T.O.P. is pleased that Congress has finally addressed the need for food safety reform within the Food and Drug Administration, its capitulation to special interest groups by creating an exemption for certain food producers seriously undermines the preventive nature of the bill and leaves millions of consumers exposed to unregulated foods.

The bill as introduced had more robust inspection measures and held all food producers and processors responsible to perform under the same letter of the law. H.R. 2751 as passed contains language introduced late in the process by Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) that enshrines in statute a two-tier food safety system that exempts food from small farms and processors, both domestic and foreign, without consideration of its public health risk. Exempted from all food safety measures included in the bill, regardless of the history of risk of the food, are food producers and processors with annual sales of up to \$500,000. Those exempted are allowed to sell food within a 275-mile radius in interstate commerce without having to inform consumers that the food was not produced or processed under federal food safety laws.

S.T.O.P. supports small farms and food processing establishments and understands that they may need additional time and resources in order to comply with laws and regulations. However, foods grown and processed in small facilities face the same food safety hazards and challenges as those from large corporate entities. Foodborne pathogens are just as deadly whether originating from a small farm or large processor and it is wrong for government to exempt any entity involved in the production of food from having to perform to federal food safety standards.

"There is no scientific evidence that food from small entities is any safer than food from large corporations", stated Kathleen Chrismer, S.T.O.P. board member, whose then 9-year-old daughter, Rylee, suffered serious illness and continued long-term consequences after eating *E. coli* O157:H7-contaminated spinach in 2006. "Deadly pathogens don't discriminate between small establishments or farms and large scale producers. Rylee didn't suffer any less because the spinach she ate was grown on a small 50-acre farm, rather than on a large-scale commercial site."

Small organic and sustainable agriculture groups aggressively campaigned for the exemption.

"I am deeply saddened that what should have been a comprehensive bill to improve food safety has been compromised in order to appease special interest groups, resulting in a loophole that leave millions at risk", stated Nancy Donley, S.T.O.P. Board President, whose 6-year-old son, Alex, died in 1993 from *E. coli* O157:H7-contaminated food. "The last time I checked, our government leaders had a charge to enact laws to protect American citizens, not businesses, large or small.

When the survival of a business trumps the survival of a human being, we, as a society, have lost our moral compass.”

S.T.O.P is a national, non-profit, public health organization dedicated to the prevention of illness and death from foodborne pathogens by advocating for sound public policy, building public awareness and assisting those impacted by foodborne illness.