

**American Public Health Association
Center for Foodborne Illness Research & Prevention
Center for Science in the Public Interest ~ Consumer Federation of America
Consumers Union ~ Food and Water Watch
Government Accountability Project ~ National Consumers League
STOP Foodborne Illness ~ The Pew Charitable Trusts
Trust for America's Health ~ United Food and Commercial Workers
U.S. Public Interest Research Group**

October 13, 2011

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

As the Senate prepares to consider the **Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for FY2012**, the undersigned members of the Make Our Food Safe Coalition and the Safe Food Coalition write to urge you to **support funding for the critical food safety functions of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the Department for Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)**. Without adequate funding for food safety, these agencies will be hampered in their efforts to protect the public health and ensure the safety of our food supply.

Our coalitions, representing consumer and public health groups and victims of foodborne illness, very much appreciate the work by the Senate Appropriations Committee, Chairman Inouye and Ranking Member Cochran, the Senate Agriculture Subcommittee, and Chairman Kohl and Ranking Member Blunt to protect the food safety budgets of FDA and USDA. We urge you to vote in favor of the recommendations passed out of this Subcommittee and Committee.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), every year about 48 million people (1 in 6 Americans) get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die from foodborne diseases. The total economic impact of foodborne illness to society has been estimated at over \$100 billion annually.

The last few months have again demonstrated the urgent need for adequate food safety resources. An ongoing foodborne illness outbreak associated with cantaloupes contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* has, to date, has been linked to 23 deaths, one miscarriage, and 116 illnesses across 25 states. In addition, in August of this year Cargill Meat Solutions Corporation recalled 36 million pounds of ground turkey contaminated with a multi-drug-resistant strain of *Salmonella* Heidelberg. This contaminated ground turkey has been linked to 129 illnesses, including one death, across 34 states. Providing critical food safety resources to FDA and USDA is essential to help these agencies prevent such outbreaks from occurring in the future. Prevention can in turn save billions of dollars in losses, both to individuals as well as to companies, due to deaths, injuries, product recalls and slumps in the sale of related food products.

In addition, FDA is currently working to implement the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), passed last year by Congress with bipartisan support. The Act directs the FDA to *prevent* foodborne illness before it happens by developing critical new preventive food safety programs, increasing inspection of food facilities, and better assuring the safety of the growing volume of imported food. The evolving nature of science and the increasing complexities of pathogens in our food supply, coupled with the new protections in the law, demonstrate the need for increased financial resources for an agency that has been severely underfunded for decades.

We urge you to support the Appropriations Committee-passed mark for FY2012 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug, and Related Agencies. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Public Health Association
Center for Foodborne Illness Research & Prevention
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Consumer Federation of America
Consumers Union
Food & Water Watch
Government Accountability Project
National Consumers League
STOP Foodborne Illness (formerly S.T.O.P.--Safe Tables Our Priority)
The Pew Charitable Trusts
Trust for America's Health
United Food and Commercial Workers
U.S. Public Interest Research Group