

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 15, 2006

The Honorable Joe Barton
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Barton:

Given the disturbing development this week regarding the *E. Coli 0157:H-7* outbreak in at least ten states, we urge you to hold a legislative hearing on H.R. 1507, the "Safe Food Act," which would create a single federal agency responsible for food safety.

As you are well aware, there are currently many agencies and departments that handle food safety issues. For example, within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) regulates meat, poultry and processed egg products, while the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN) and Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) regulate produce and other food products. Finally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) tracks foodborne illnesses. Too often, divided responsibilities and bureaucratic red tape interfere with the federal government's ability to safeguard public health.

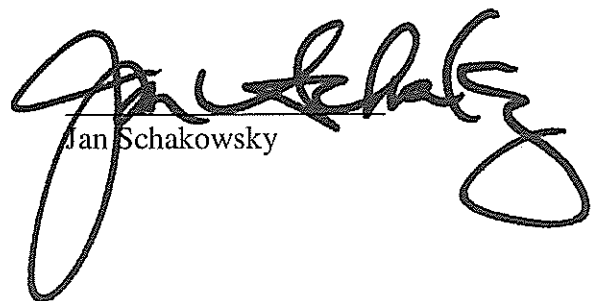
The "Safe Food Act" is critical legislation that would consolidate all food safety agencies and establish the Food Safety Administration. By having a single department responsible for the creation, administration, and enforcement of our food safety laws and regulations, the federal government will be better equipped to prevent foodborne illness and protect our food supply. If an outbreak occurs, one agency will be responsible for tracking outbreaks, preventing the spread, tracing the contamination to its origin, and quickly fixing the problems that allowed it to occur.

As the original sponsor and cosponsors of this legislation, we appreciate your consideration of our request, and recognize that few legislative days remain in this session of Congress with much work to be done. But few issues are as important as ensuring public health and protecting our food supply. Please do not hesitate to call us with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,


Rosa DeLauro


Diana DeGette


Jan Schakowsky