



JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE
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SCHUMER: WHITE HOUSE PLAN FOR IMPORT SAFETY LEAVES CONSUMERS IN THE DARK AND A HODGEPODGE OF FEDERAL OVERSIGHT

*Schumer Alternative Creates New Commerce Department Official to
Coordinate Food and Product Safety Oversight*

*Schumer Bill Promotes Development of Food Tracing Technology to
Reveal Supply Chain History of All Consumable Goods*

*Bush Administration Plan Only Targets “High-Risk” Products and
Expands the Authority of Failing Agencies*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer (D-NY), the Chairman of the Joint Economic Committee and a member of the Senate Finance Committee, today reacted to the Bush Administration’s import safety working group recommendations on policing food and product safety after rounds of recalls of unsafe food and lead-tainted toys exposed massive gaps in the U.S. import safety framework. The White House plan, which may lack critical funding, would ideally target the riskiest products, increase penalties for violators and give the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) more authority to access production records, require testing, and recall tainted products.

“The administration's working group on import safety leaves consumers in the dark and continues the hodgepodge of federal oversight. Of course we need tougher penalties, more inspections, and better information sharing when it comes to the food and toys coming into our country,” Schumer said. **“However, the rubber won't meet the road until the administration does three key things: Provide the FDA and CPSC with more federal dollars so they can carry out their heavy mandates; give consumers quick and user-friendly access to comprehensive food and product safety information; and set and implement government-wide priorities for import and domestic food and product safety oversight.”**

Schumer introduced groundbreaking legislation last week establishing a new office within the Department of Commerce to coordinate the oversight activities of the patchwork of agencies that regulate foods and products sold in the United States. The new position would bring order to the current regulatory setup, which is hobbled in part by confusing overlaps in agency jurisdiction and the lack of uniform standards for product quality and inspection regularity. The new official would head a council, also formed under Schumer's legislation that includes representatives from the various agencies with food and product safety oversight responsibilities.

The official would be charged with the following tasks to ensure consumer safety and streamline the regulatory process:

- Create a "one-stop" online database with information on all food and product recalls, advisories, alerts, seizures, defect determinations, and import bans.
- Implement a national recall alert system for disseminating as-it-happens information on recalls to consumers and businesses, including retailers, the media, and medical professionals.
- Improve identification and prevention of unsafe imports.
- Promote the development of food tracing technology to provide consumers with access to the supply chain history of a consumer product.

Schumer has also co-sponsored legislation with Sen. Mark Pryor (D-AR) to reform the Consumer Product Safety Commission, expanding its authority, increasing fines, and improving transparency. The legislation also:

- Requires independent, third party safety certification on every children's product that enters the United States.
- Requires manufacturers to label children's products with tracking information useful to facilitate recall.
- Bans the direct use of lead in all children's products.
- Allows state Attorneys General to bring civil action on behalf of its residents to enforce product safety laws.
- Provides whistleblower protections for manufacturers' and importers' employees to shed light on any problems along the supply chain.
- Makes it unlawful for retailers to sell a recalled product.

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