



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

America's Voice for Safe Food

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Statement by Nancy Donley

President and mother of Alex, E. coli O157:H7 victim (1987-1993)

Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro's "Food Safety Modernization Act"

The phrase, "it's time for change", has become something of a mantra these days, and in the case of the safety of our nation's food supply, nothing could be more true. It's time for government to do its job and better protect the public from deadly food.

Everyone has to eat to survive. Not eating is simply not an option. But increasingly Americans are being threatened by the very thing that should be life sustaining—food. This is why it is crucial that our government, whose mission is to defend its citizens, get its act together by developing, enacting and enforcing strong food safety laws and regulations to better protect consumers from harmful contaminants in food.

Each year 76 million people are sickened from tainted food requiring 325,000 hospitalizations and resulting in 5,000 deaths. That's nearly 14 people dead each and every day from unsafe food. And it need not and should not be happening.

While food companies are ultimately responsible for the safety of the product that they make, government has a critical role in ensuring that companies are achieving food safety standards to prevent unsafe food being shipped into the marketplace and ultimately to our dinner plates.

This latest foodborne illness epidemic from *Salmonella*- tainted peanut products is another tragic example of a broken food safety system that needs significant change in order to protect consumers. To date 550 people have been stricken and a known 8 people have lost their lives.

For far too long food has played third fiddle behind drugs and medical devices within the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). We believe that Congresswoman DeLauro's "Food Safety Modernization Act" will reverse this short-changing of resources for food safety within Health and Human Services (HHS). Its establishment of a separate Food Safety Administration headed by an Administrator who will report directly to the Secretary of HHS will elevate its importance and stature within the U.S. government and will finally bring focus to the issue of food safety as it will no longer have to vie for attention from a commissioner who also oversees drugs and medical devices.

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Safe Tables Our Priority is a national, non-profit, public health organization dedicated to preventing, illness and death from foodborne pathogens. In 2009, S.T.O.P. will achieve its mission by advocating changes in public policy, educating and doing outreach, providing victim assistance, and formalizing a victims of foodborne illness registry in order to study the long-term consequences of foodborne disease.