

SAFE FOOD COALITION

1620 I Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006 202-797-8551

November 14, 2006

The Honorable Michael Enzi
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Senate Dirken Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Enzi:

The undersigned members of the Safe Food Coalition strongly object to the lack of consumer and victim representation at tomorrow's Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions hearing on "Food Safety: Current Challenges and New Ideas to Safeguard Consumers."

The Safe Food Coalition consists of consumer groups, groups representing victims of foodborne illness, and union organizations dedicated to reducing the burden of foodborne illness in the United States. Our members have been particularly active on the spinach-related *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreak, which we understand to be the main focus of your hearing.

According to the witness list for tomorrow's hearing, the Committee will hear from members of federal and state government and members of the food industry. Yet those who have been affected most personally, whose health and safety have been put at risk, will have no representation at this hearing. The spinach-related *E. coli* outbreak killed at least three people and sickened over 200 people. Consumers had to stop eating spinach for a period of time and were deeply concerned about the safety of produce in general. Yet neither representatives from victims of the spinach outbreak nor consumers have been invited to testify at this hearing.

We object to this lack of representation and urge you to include all stakeholders in hearings such as these. Consumers and victims of foodborne illness represent a unique and valuable perspective on issues of food safety and the Committee would be well-served to consider their viewpoint when developing these hearings.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Caroline Smith DeWaal
Center for Science in the Public Interest

Chris Waldrop
Consumer Federation of America

Susanna Montezemolo
Consumers Union

Wenonah Hauter
Food & Water Watch

Jacqueline Ostfeld
Government Accountability Project

Alison Rein
National Consumers League

Barb Kowalczyk
Safe Tables Our Priority

Michael J. Wilson
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union

CC: Senator Edward Kennedy, Ranking Member
Senator Richard Durbin
Senator Tom Harkin
Senate HELP Committee Members