



Food Safety Legislation Passes Senate Committee

November 20, 2009

The Health Education, Labor and Pensions Committee of the U.S. Senate earlier this week passed the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act, S 510. Similar legislation (H.R. 2749, the Food Safety Enhancement Act of 2009) passed the House of Representatives in July.

Food safety reform has been a topic of much discussion in Washington, D.C., this year after several incidents of food contamination. Most of the focus is on the production and processing of food, because these are areas of greater vulnerability to contamination. But transportation is also being discussed in an effort to cover every aspect of food handling and every potential source of contamination.

Many provisions in the bills direct general outcomes but leave implementation to specific regulations issued by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The House version of the bill and the Senate version are not significantly different in how they would affect transportation. It appears now that most of the requirements for food transportation contained in the two bills do not go beyond what reputable carriers already do as a normal part of business to meet requirements of their shippers. AFTC will continue to monitor the issue as this legislation is finalized and regulations are issued by the FDA.

The two bills are supported by several prominent food industry and consumer organizations, including the Grocery Manufacturers of America, United Fresh Produce Association, National Association of County and City Health Officials, National Restaurant Association and the Trust for America's Health, Center for Science in the Public Interest, and the Consumer Federation of America.

There is currently no timetable for consideration of this legislation on the Senate floor but there seems to be strong consensus to enact final legislation into law.