

More than 12 government agencies cannot do the job, Obama wants to add one more

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Today, February 2, 2015, President Barack Obama sent his FY 2016 federal budget to the U.S. Congress to increase taxes, spending and debt to the nation's balance sheet. Included in the vast budget was a plan to add another agency, the Food Safety Administration, to the federal government. It will be charged to do what more than 12 agencies currently do poorly – keeping the nation's food supply safe. This inclusion in the 2016 budget is due to the failure of **Congress' 2011 last major reform** to keep the nation's food supply safe. In 2014, the CATO Institute, a well-respected public policy organization based in Washington, **outlined the failure of the Food Safety Modernization Act last year**. The FY 2016 budget proposal would give a 9 percent boost to \$4.9 billion to the FDA's current budget even though they now would have less responsibilities.

The CDC reports that over 48 million food-borne illnesses are occurring each year in the United States under the current system. The bill would, among other things, consolidate food safety authority for inspections, enforcement and labeling, provide authority to recall unsafe food, and improve foreign food import inspections. It is yet unclear how the new agency's creation would increase the safety of America's food supply.

Under the Obama's proposal, he aims to combine the FDA's food safety agency and the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the Department of Agriculture to be run under the Department of Health and Human Services. The move, if adopted, would also alleviate the CDC's work of coordinating regulations and reporting with state and local health departments. This would effect the recently introduced **Safe Food Act of 2015**, a bill introduced late last week by Democratic Senator Richard Durbin. There are three U.S. Senators who have co-sponsored the legislation – all Democrats. They are Senator Dianne Feinstein, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Senator Richard Blumenthal. The bill has had no Republican support so it was destined to go nowhere due to the Republican controlled U.S. House and Senate.