

This is a WorldNetDaily printer-friendly version of the article which follows.
To view this item online, visit <http://www.worldnetdaily.com/index.php?pageId=234937>

WorldNetDaily™

Tuesday, November 30, 2010

WorldNetDaily

American food safety gets massive overhaul

Senate ushers in uber-regulatory state over ranchers, farmers

Posted: November 30, 2010
11:02 pm Eastern

WorldNetDaily

A bill that radically expands the federal government's regulatory grip over farmers, ranchers, and food processors today passed the U.S. Senate, overcoming the vocal opposition of right-leaning and tea-party activists, and parliamentary delaying tactics by Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., which, ultimately, only postponed passage of the measure by a mere week.

"Our food safety is controlled by market forces more than anything," said Coburn, a medical doctor, who pleaded unsuccessfully for free-market alternatives to the bill on the Senate floor. "If you look at our history, on food-borne contamination, we're by far the safest in the world. And our rates have been coming down since 1996. Over the last 14 years, our rates have come down in terms of food-borne illnesses."

Coburn said the bill creates more than \$2 billion in new costs for the U.S. economy during the next five years, dramatically strengthening the federal leviathan, even as the economy struggles to recover from the recession: \$1.4 billion in direct, new costs to empower bureaucrats at the FDA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as a \$400 billion increase in costs of food, and \$141 million in new spending mandates for the states to stop diseases such as botulism, E.coli, salmonella, streptococcus, and parasites and viruses, including hepatitis A.



"We're growing the government," said Coburn, in an impassioned speech. "We're going to raise costs. And we're still going to have food borne illnesses."

Right-leaning activists and scholars agree with Coburn's analysis, telling WND that food-borne disease outbreaks have "changed little" in recent years, remaining relatively constant.

Undeterred by these facts, the bill, the biggest expansion of federal power over agriculture and food processing since the Roosevelt Administration, is apparently on a fast track for approval in the House in the waning days of Nancy Pelosi's tenure as speaker, and will then head to the White House for President Obama's signature.

The bill, S. 510, the Food Safety Modernization Act, passed by a margin of 73-25, meaning many Republicans joined in, apparently swayed by lobbying of left-leaning health groups and inside-the-beltway trade associations.

Dr. Rene Massengale, an associate professor of biotechnology at Harrisburg University of Science and Technology in Pennsylvania, tells WND in an e-mail that the bill will hasten the "transition" of the agriculture and food-production industries from smaller, family run operations, to "one in which fewer, but larger operations exist."

(Story continues below)

Chris Kennedy, a spokesman for the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute, told WND the FDA made him "cringe" now because of its "functions and foibles."

This will surely only worsen in the coming years, as commentators such as Glenn Beck and Michelle Malkin also opposed the bill, with Malkin aptly describing the legislation as the beginning of the creation of a force of federal "food police" in Washington, D.C.

In addition to the \$2 billion in new costs for taxpayers, the bill also adds 280 pages of new rules and regulations for FDA and USDA, further empowering Washington bureaucrats, and:

- Requires farmers and food processors to allow FDA access to all their records.
- Increases FDA's power to inspect domestic and imported food.
- Gives the FDA "mandatory recall authority" over foodstuffs.
- Creates a new regulatory regime for pet food, and commercial animal food.
- Requires food processors and farmers to develop "hazard prevention" plans.

The audacious bill also purports to give the U.S. government the authority to go overseas and inspect food plants and farms there. According to the Congressional Budget Office, or CBO, 50,000 foreign and domestic food facilities would be inspected in 2015 by FDA or federal, state, local or foreign officials acting as FDA's agents.

Some inside-the-beltway industry-lobbying groups applauded the Senate measure, taking the stance that it could have been much worse for them, given the Democrats are still in charge of Congress until Jan. 3, 2011.

The American Feed Industry Association's president and CEO Joel G. Newman, in a statement to reporters, said the bill was both "bipartisan" and "inclusive."

The National Grain and Feed Association even called on Pelosi to pass the Senate's version of the bill, with its president Kendell W. Keith saying, "We would have very serious concerns if the House were to deviate from the Senate-passed measure if it proceeds to consider the bill during the congressional lame-duck session."

This political strategy is nonsensical to Coburn and others, who fought valiantly against the bill during this lame-duck session of Congress.

Curiously, the Centers for Disease Control, in a paper called "[Food Related Illness and Death in the U.S.](#)," noted that the cause of many supposed food-borne illnesses is not food, but, rather, "pathogens transmitted through water or from person to person, thus obscuring the role of food-borne transmission."

What's more, the CDC, in a 2005 paper titled "Capacity of State and Territorial Health Agencies to Prevent Food-Borne Illnesses," indicates that food-borne illnesses are quite common, with some 325,000 hospitalizations annually, in the U.S. The report added the CDC already "institutionalized" the government's previous national food-safety initiative years ago in Atlanta, the headquarters of CDC. The paper also said food safety was best handled on the "local level."

"I'm not fighting against food safety," said Coburn, in opposing the bill. "I'm fighting for common sense."