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SCHAKOWSKY, DELAURO and DEGETTE CALL FOR HEARING ON THE SAFE FOOD ACT

E.COLI OUTBREAK IN 10 STATES SHOWS NEED FOR SINGLE AGENCY TO OVERSEE FOOD SAFETY LAWS

WASHINGTON, DC -- On the heels of the multi-state E. coli outbreak, U.S. Representatives Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Janice Schakowsky (D-IL) and Diana DeGette (D-CO) sent a letter to Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Joe Barton (R-TX) asking for a hearing on their bill the "Safe Food Act," H.R. 1507. This legislation would consolidate all food safety agencies and establish the Food Safety Administration, responsible for the creation, administration and enforcement of our food safety laws.

"This outbreak highlights the need for a strong food safety inspection system. We often associate E. coli with contaminated meat, but this outbreak involving spinach demonstrates that we need to be alert on all fronts for possible sources of the infection," said DeLauro. "The Food Safety Administration that would be created under my bill would streamline the oversight of our food system - preventing many cases of foodborne illness like E. coli."

Food and Drug Administration officials have found more than 50 cases of E. coli outbreak from spinach in 10 states. Since the outbreak was first reported on Thursday one person has died and dozens more have become sick from eating tainted spinach. E. coli is commonly present in animal manure, which is used as fertilizer.

"This latest outbreak underscores the long overdue need for passage of strong legislation to protect consumers from tainted food. The Safe Food Act would help us achieve that goal, and our committee should act on it immediately," said Representative Jan Schakowsky, ranking Democrat on the Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection Subcommittee.

"Our bill would establish a Food Safety Administration which would put all food safety laws under one roof, better serving the American public. We can't afford to wait for the next outbreak to act," said Representative DeGette.