RECOGNIZING THE NOMINEES TO OUR NATION'S SERVICE ACADEMIES

HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 2, 2005

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize several outstanding individuals from my district in West Virginia who have been nominated to our nation's service academies.

Making nominations to our nation's service academies is one of my most important duties as a Congresswoman.

These young men and women are all impressive individuals that have clearly demonstrated academic excellence, extracurricular involvement, and athletic achievements.

Their parents, teachers, and advisors should be very proud of their prestigious accomplishments.

I commend their parents and family for encouraging and supporting these young men and women in the pursuit of their dreams.

I am pleased they have decided to pursue military careers.

Those who choose military careers represent the best of West Virginia and ensure our state motto continues to ring true, "Montani Semper Liberi . . . Mountaineers Are Always Free".

There is no better way for them to use their talents.

I extend my sincerest congratulations for their nominations.

I am very proud of them.

These young men and women have my very best wishes for a bright future.

Jeremy Runco, Ranson; Thomas Flanagan, Charles Town; Sheena Huffman, Gerrardstown; Jerome Lademan, Charles Town; Samuel Talbott, Elkins; Tina Weekley, Ravenswood; Blake Chapman, Charleston; Garrett Dilley, Hurricane; Allen Hartley, Charleston; Alex Hemmelgarn, Clay; Matthew Kearns, Cross Lanes; Brian Martin, St. Albans; Jonathan McCormick, St. Albans; Noah Pfost, Ravenswood; Joshua Russell, Nitro; Joshua Suesli, Gassaway.

FOOD SAFETY

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 2, 2005

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to call your attention to the following article, which I submit for the RECORD, written by my constituent, Richard Gilmore. Mr. Gilmore is the President and CEO of the GIC Group. The GIC Group combines experience and strength in research, analysis, and marketing with financial services and asset management. It offers this expertise to the agribusiness and biotechnology industries to help businesses gain access to global and domestic markets, to add value to current agribusiness activities, and to identify new markets.

Upon leaving the Bush Administration, former Secretary of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson stated that protecting the safety of the American food supply should be a top priority. Mr. Gilmore's article addresses that issue. While I may not agree with all of Mr. Gilmore's proposals, I recommend this article to every citizen interested in the integrity of the food supply chain and the safety of the food we consume every day.

U.S. FOOD SAFETY UNDER SIEGE?

(By Richard Gilmore)

When it comes to the prospect of an agroterrorist attack—the use of biological agents against crops, livestock, poultry and fish—US agriculture has rolled out the welcome mat. Integration and consolidation in the industry widen the potential impact of any single attack. Internationalization of the food chain offers limitless possibilities for human consumption contagions, as well as economic and political instabilities. To combat and anticipate potential attacks to the US food chain, greater effort should be placed on designing new disease-resistant varieties of plants and livestock on the basis of genomic information. Stricter regulations and enforcement capabilities should be introduced not only at our borders but at the point of origin where food is grown, procured for processed for domestic consumption within the United States. At the same time, the United States must develop a comprehensive preparedness and prevention strategy of international proportions in close coordination with our trading partners and the private sector.

CHANGES IN FOOD PRODUCTION AND REGULATION

The US strategy of protection for the food system, as mapped out in the Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD–9 of January 30, 2004, presupposes that in striving to protect production, processing, food storage and delivery systems within US territory, a credible line of defense will be created to protect the food chain and encourage a thriving agricultural economy. In fact, US agriculture has undergone dramatic change. For crops, 'farm to fork' no longer is confined to a regionally based agricultural system, but now encompasses a highly integrated and consolidated global undertaking. For livestock, 'hoof to home' now takes on a new meaning that includes a high concentration of production, specialization of calf operations, long distance shipping and massive feedlots averaging thousands of head marketed per facility, for both domestic and international consumption. These commercial developments have resulted in previously unimaginable production and handling efficiencies in domestic and export markets.

In 2001, over 70% of processed food in the United States was purchased from other countries, representing almost 30% of final gross product. Fifteen of the top 25 food and beverage companies in the global market are US owned, accounting for about 10% of the global market. US multinational companies account for roughly 6.5%. With greater consolidation on a global scale, interaffiliate trades account for an increasing portion of the value of the food chain. Like other nations, the United States is moving from self-sufficiency to an increasing dependence on other countries for its food supply.

At the same time, the US regulatory infrastructure for food safety is still a work in progress and is hobbled by overdependence on the private sector and underdependence on international cooperation. Whether it is a matter of detection, surveillance or information flow, the US government is currently dependent on the private sector for cooperation and support. To share information, government and industry have established the Food and Agriculture Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ISAC; Washington, DC, USA), which includes key industry association representatives, especially from the processed food and feed sectors.

The Bioterrorism Act of 2002 sets up tracking mechanisms whose effectiveness depends on industry self-reporting. New food import regulations issued by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA; Rockville, MD, USA) now require prior notification of eight hours for goods arriving by ship, four hours by rail or air and two hours by road. This dependence on the private sector is burdensome for companies and both insufficient and unreliable for ensuring the public's food safety concerns.

Current regulations have evolved since last December, after a reality check of the US government's enforcement capabilities along with industry's feedback and support. The initial regulations failed on both counts and the prospects for the latest regulations remain uncertain. FDA and the Customs & Border Protection Agency (Washington, DC, USA) still have not adequately funded the enforcement infrastructure nor trained personnel to ensure statistically random, uniform inspections under the new prenotification time frames. Industry is called upon to fill the breach but is still relatively unprepared, with insufficient esource commitment to comply fully with the latest regulations.

There remains a remarkable lack of consultation, joint surveillance and shared research with trading partners worldwide. Whether grits or pasta, the US diet still thrives on an international food supply chain. Similarly, food protection and terrorist prevention have to be internationalized, particularly given the advances that continental-wide Europe and Japan have achieved in this regard.

THE THREATS

Although no precedent exists for an agroterrorist attack on the food chain, the dire consequences of natural outbreaks provide a glimpse of the potential damage that could be wrought. The scale of the foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreaks in Taiwan in 1997 and in the UK in 2001 or the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) epidemic in the United Kingdom from 1996 to 2002 was more devastating than previous epidemics because of the size and structure of modern agricultural production. Taiwan was forced to slaughter more than 8 million pigs and suspend its exports. In the United Kingdom, 4.2 million animals were destroyed in 2001 and 2002, with devastating economic consequences. The cost to Taiwan, a major supplier to Japan, was estimated to be over $20 billion. In the United Kingdom, direct compensation payments alone amounted to approximately $9.6 billion. Because of two major outbreaks of BSE, the United Kingdom slaughtered approximately 5.8 million head of cattle (30 months or older), with an impact of up to $8 billion for the 2000–2001 occurrence alone. The 2003 Dutch outbreak of H7N7, a very pathogenic strain of avian influenza virus, resulted in the necessary culling of over 28 million birds out of a total of 100 million. These numbers pale in comparison to the estimates for a terrorist-induced pathogen release at the heart of the international food chain. The range is astonishing, from almost $7 billion due to a contagion of Asiatic citrus canker on Florida's