

Retired Files of Nicole Rabner

Special Assistant to the President & Senior Policy Advisor to the First Lady

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 15, 1999

STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

The President's Council on Food Safety/ National Academy of Sciences Report

Today the President's Council on Food Safety released its response to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report, "Ensuring Safe Food from Production to Consumption." The Council response supports all the goals contained in the NAS's recommendations to strengthen the food safety system.

The National Academy of Sciences report, "Ensuring Safe Food From Production to Consumption," made three basic conclusions: (1) an effective and efficient food safety system must be based on science; (2) the current statutes governing food safety should be revised in order to achieve a food safety system based on science; and (3) Congress should enact legislation to establish a unified and central framework for managing federal food safety programs, which should be headed by a single official with responsibility for all federal food safety activities.

The Council agrees with these conclusions and lauds the NAS report as a constructive contribution to efforts to improve the effectiveness of the federal food safety system through the strengthening of science and risk assessment, strategic planning, and better federal integration with state and local governments.

The President stated: "I am committed to ensuring the safety of America's food supply, and the NAS report will play a key role in our continuing efforts to establish a seamless, science-based food safety system. I call on Congress to support the changes necessary to make our food as safe as possible."

The Council responded to each of the recommendations in the NAS report with the specific assessments briefly described below:

Recommendation: The food safety system should be based on science. The Council agrees and provides numerous examples where this is already the case, including the development and implementation of the FoodNet and PulseNet systems for surveillance and identification of foodborne pathogens and the implementation of new science-based inspections of meat, poultry, and seafood. The Council has also identified areas that should be strengthened such as improving the ability to assess health risks from pathogens in food.

Recommendation: Federal statutes should be based on scientifically supportable risks to public health. The Council agrees and will call on Congress to work with it to create scientifically-based statutes to promote food safety. The Council will conduct a thorough review of existing statutes and determine what can be accomplished with existing regulatory flexibility and what improvements will require statutory changes.

Recommendation: A comprehensive national food safety plan should be developed. The development of such a plan is already underway and is one of the primary functions of the Council. One component of the plan will be exploring methods to assess the comparative health risks to the nation's food supply.

Recommendation: A new statute should be enacted that establishes a unified framework for food safety programs with a single official with control over all federal food safety resources. The Council supports the goal of a unified framework for food safety programs and will conduct an assessment of structural models and other mechanisms to strengthen the federal food safety system through better coordination, planning, and resource allocation.

Recommendation: Agencies should work more effectively with partners in state and local governments. The Council agrees that the roles of state, tribal, and local governments in the food safety system are critical and that their efforts deserve the formal recognition that partnership in a national food safety system conveys.

The President established the Council on August 25, 1998 to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for federal food safety activities and ensure that federal agencies annually develop coordinated food safety budgets.

Jason H. Schechter
01/04/99 11:37:45 AM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

CC:

Subject: Fact Sheet: Food Safety in FY 2000 Budget Proposal

Food Safety in FY 2000 Budget Proposal

President Clinton will recommend increasing funds for food safety by \$105 million -- or 12 percent -- in his fiscal 2000 budget proposal. If enacted, the budget would result in a third year of significant growth in government efforts to prevent potentially deadly foodborne illness by putting into place a modern, science-based food safety system involving improved inspection, surveillance, research, and education activities. The new funds are to be shared by the Department of Agriculture (USDA), which would receive \$65 million, and the Department of Health and Human Services, which would receive \$40 million.

Improving Domestic and International Food Safety Inspections

The President's proposal would significantly expand inspections of domestic food products. New funds for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which protects the safety of all food products except meat and poultry, would enable the agency to use more than 60 new inspectors to inspect, at least once each year, every domestic manufacturer of high-risk food products (generally, products that are not cooked by consumers). Currently, these manufacturers are inspected every three to four years. Additional funds for USDA would permit the broad expansion of its science-based, prevention-oriented meat and poultry inspection system, called Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), which already has significantly reduced contamination in these food products. HACCP is now in effect at the nation's 300 largest meat and poultry facilities. USDA would use the proposed new funds to introduce HACCP at 2,700 smaller plants (those employing 10 to 499 employees), which would mean that 90 percent of all meat and poultry will be covered.

The President's budget would also increase scrutiny of imported food products. Under the proposal, the FDA would more than double the number of inspections conducted of foreign food processors. In addition, FDA technical experts will work with food safety officials abroad to ensure that their food-growing, processing, and transportation systems meet high standards for safe production. The President will also continue to push Congress to pass legislation enabling the FDA to cut off all imports from foreign countries whose food safety systems are not equivalent to those in this country.

Public Health Research and Surveillance

The President's budget includes a significant component for surveillance and research activities. To help officials track pathogens back to their source and prevent outbreaks of foodborne illnesses from spreading, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) will use new funds to almost double the number of laboratories that do "DNA fingerprinting" of foodborne pathogens. FDA and USDA also will use new funds to expand research to develop more effective ways of testing for and identifying dangerous contaminants such as Salmonella and Cyclospora.

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A Record of Accomplishment

The President's proposal builds on a strong record of actions to ensure that Americans eat the safest possible food. Last year, the President proposed a \$101 million increase in food-safety funding, more than \$80 million of which was ultimately approved by Congress in the final budget. The Administration has put in place improved safety standards for meat, poultry, and seafood product, and has begun the process of developing enhanced standards for fruit and vegetable juices.

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Message Sent To: _____

**PRESIDENT CLINTON SIGNS EXECUTIVE ORDER
CREATING COUNCIL ON FOOD SAFETY
August 24, 1998**

President Clinton today will sign an Executive Order to create a President's Council on Food Safety, which will develop a comprehensive strategic plan for federal food safety activities and ensure that federal agencies annually develop coordinated food safety budgets. The President also will sign a directive to the Council to review the recently issued National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report, "Ensuring Safe Food from Production to Consumption," and to report back with its response to the report, including appropriate additional actions to improve food safety.

President's Council on Food Safety. The President will sign an Executive Order establishing a President's Council on Food Safety (Council). The Council will have three primary functions, including: (1) developing a comprehensive strategic federal food safety plan; (2) advising agencies of priority areas for investment in food safety and ensuring that federal agencies annually develop coordinated food safety budgets; and (3) overseeing the recently established Joint Institute for Food Safety Research and ensuring that it addresses the highest priority research needs.

- **Comprehensive strategic federal food safety plan.** The Council will develop a comprehensive plan to improve the safety of the nation's food supply by establishing a seamless, science-based food safety system. The plan will address the steps necessary to achieve this improved system, focusing on key public health, resource, and management issues and including measurable outcome goals. The planning process will consider both short and long-term issues including new and emerging threats and the special needs of vulnerable populations such as children and the elderly. In developing this plan, the Council will consult with all interested parties, including state and local agencies, tribes, consumers, producers, industry, and academia.
- **Coordinated federal food safety budgets.** Consistent with the comprehensive strategic federal food safety plan, the Council will advise agencies of priority areas for investment in food safety and ensure that federal agencies annually develop coordinated food safety budgets. This coordinated food safety budget process will sustain and strengthen existing activities, eliminate duplication, and ensure the most effective use of resources for improving food safety.
- **Oversight of federal food safety research efforts.** The Council will ensure that the Joint Institute for Food Safety Research addresses the highest priority food safety research gaps. The Institute will report, on a regular basis, to the Council on its efforts to conduct and coordinate food safety research activities and will receive direction from the Council on research needed to

establish the most effective possible food safety system.

Review of NAS Report. The President will direct the Council, as one of its first orders of business, to review the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report, "Ensuring Safe Food from Production to Consumption." After providing opportunity for public comment, including public meetings, the Council will report back to the President within 180 days with its response to the NAS report. The Council's report will consider appropriate additional actions to improve food safety, including proposals for legislative reform of the food safety system.

Public Meeting to Develop Comprehensive Strategic Plan for Federal Food Safety Activities. The Clinton Administration will publish notice of the first public meeting, to be held on October 2 in Arlington, Virginia, to begin development of the Council's comprehensive strategic plan for federal food safety activities. The meeting will engage consumers, producers, industry, food service providers, retailers, health professionals, State and local governments, Tribes, academia, and the public in the strategic planning process.

Clinton Administration Accomplishments In Improving Food Safety

The President's announcement builds on a strong record of food safety initiatives, ensuring that Americans eat the safest possible food. The Administration has put into place improved safety standards for meat, poultry, and seafood products, and has begun the process of developing enhanced standards for fruit and vegetable juices. The Administration also has expanded research, education, and surveillance activities throughout the food safety system.

*July 1998. President creates a Joint Institute of Food Safety Research which will develop a strategic plan for conducting and coordinating all federal food safety research activities, including with the private sector and academia.

*February 1998. Administration announces its proposed food safety budget, which requests an approximate \$101 million increase for food safety initiatives.

*May 1997. Administration announces comprehensive new initiative to improve the safety of nation's food supply -- "Food Safety from Farm to Table" -- detailing a \$43 million food safety program, including measures to improve surveillance, outbreak response, education, and research.

*January 1997. President announces new Early-Warning System to gather critical scientific data to help stop foodborne disease outbreaks quickly and to improve prevention systems.

*August 1996. President signs Safe Drinking Water Act of 1996. The law requires drinking water systems to protect against dangerous contaminants like *Cryptosporidium*, and gives people the right to know about contaminants in their tap water.

*August 1996. President signs Food Quality Protection Act of 1996, which streamlines regulation of pesticides by FDA and EPA and puts important new public-health protections in place, especially for children.

*July 1996. President announces new regulations that modernize the nation's meat and poultry inspection system for the first time in 90 years. New standards help prevent *E.coli* bacteria contamination in meat.

*December 1995. Administration issues new rules to ensure seafood safety, utilizing HACCP regulatory programs to require food industries to design and implement preventive measures and increase the industries' responsibility for and control of their safety assurance actions.

*1994. CDC embarks on strategic program to detect, prevent, and control

emerging infectious disease threats, some of which are foodborne, making significant progress toward this goal in each successive year.

*1993. Vice-President's National Performance Review issues report recommending government and industry move toward a system of preventive controls.

Clinton to Appoint Council To Oversee Safety of Food

By IRVIN MOLOTSKY

WASHINGTON, Aug. 24 — President Clinton will appoint a high-level council to oversee food safety in the United States, an activity now performed separately by a dozen agencies, a senior White House official said today.

The official said Mr. Clinton would sign an executive order on Tuesday establishing the council, which would have the responsibility of coordinating enforcement, research and educational activities but would not have the authority to do any of those things on its own.

Although the United States is generally regarded as having one of the safest food supplies in the world, there are frequent outbreaks of illnesses, many of them fatal, caused by harmful substances in food. In recent years a strain of bacteria known as E. coli O157:H7 has caused many illnesses and deaths.

The Government until recently has shown little leadership in dealing with illnesses caused by unwholesome food. There is a patchwork of weak state agencies as well as a Federal bureaucracy that focused more on reacting to outbreaks than on preventing them. The new executive order places emphasis on prevention.

In a report issued last week by the Institute of Research and the National Research Council, two groups that advise the Government on science, the number of deaths caused by food-borne organisms was estimated at 9,000 a year, a figure that is disputed by the food industry as too high.

The chairman of the panel that produced the report, Dr. John C. Bailar 3d of the University of Chicago, said, "The United States has some of the attributes of an effective food safety system, but it lacks a central authority and is hampered by old laws that don't allow flexible responses to today's threats."

The organizations, arms of the National Academy of Science, called in its report for the appointment of one individual to oversee food safety, a czar in current government argot.

Instead, the President will name a troika to lead the new council, which is not expected to require any new Federal money.

Mr. Clinton will appoint three co-chairmen of what will be called the President's Council on Food Safety. They will be the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Assistant to the President for Science and Tech-

nology.

Serving as members of the council will be the Secretary of Commerce, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy and the Director of the National Partnership for Reinventing Government.

Officials of consumer and industry organizations, who had not yet seen the final order, praised its thrust, but with some reservations.

Caroline Smith DeWaal, director of food safety at the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a consumer group, lamented the choice of a three-headed council over a strong individual as recommended in the scientists' report.

But Ms. DeWaal added: "We think that this is acceptable as a temporary measure, a first step. The report clearly found weaknesses in how we currently inspect food. This is modestly better."

Timothy Willard, the spokesman of the National Food Processors Association, said the appointment of the council "seems to be moving in the right direction."

The industry official was pleased that the program would not be led by a single person. "When you have a czar, that would probably create a new bureaucracy," he said. "It is important to keep politics out of food safety."

The White House official said Congress would not be asked to provide additional money to run the council.

When asked why the President was creating the council by executive order instead of asking Congress to institute it with legislation, she answered: "When the law allows us to put in place a mechanism with an executive order, we are going to act to achieve our objectives. Current law does allow us to put it in place."

Left unsaid was the likelihood that the Republican-controlled Congress would refuse to pass legislation imposing further regulation.

Rahm Emanuel, a senior adviser to President Clinton, said today that the creation of the council was an important part in Mr. Clinton's efforts to make food safety a high priority.

"Basically, the system has been unchanged since Teddy Roosevelt put it in place," Mr. Emanuel said. "It's another chapter in the President's efforts to modernize the nation's food safety system."

The New York Times

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 1998

**PRESIDENT CLINTON ANNOUNCES INTRODUCTION OF SENATE FOOD
SAFETY LEGISLATION AND REPORT TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF
IMPORTED AND DOMESTIC FRUITS AND VEGETABLES**

March 4, 1998

Today President Clinton will announce the introduction of legislation by Senators Milkulski and Kennedy to ensure the safety of all imported foods, including fruits and vegetables. This legislation will enhance the Food and Drug Administration's authority to prevent the import of fruits, vegetables, and other food products that do not meet U.S. food safety requirements. The President also will announce the release of a report that provides a blueprint on how the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) will work cooperatively with the agricultural community to develop guidance on good agricultural and manufacturing practices for fruits and vegetables.

Enhanced FDA Oversight for Imported Foods. The President will call on Congress to pass the food safety legislation to be introduced today in the Senate to give the FDA greater authority over imported foods. This legislation will ensure that the FDA halts imports of fruits, vegetables, and other food products from any foreign country with food safety systems that do not provide the same level of protection required for U.S. products. The legislation also permits the FDA to consider refusal of inspection as a factor in halting imports from a country or facility. This legislation gives FDA authority that is comparable to USDA's existing authority to prevent the importation of unsafe meat and poultry. The President already has committed to providing approximately \$25 million in his Fiscal Year 1999 budget to enable the FDA to dramatically expand its international food inspection force in order to implement this legislation. Reps. Eshoo and Pallone previously have introduced this legislation in the House of Representatives.

Development of Guidance on Good Agricultural and Manufacturing Practices. The President will announce the release of a report on how the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in partnership with the Secretary of Agriculture and in cooperation with the agricultural community, will develop guidance on good agricultural and manufacturing practices. This report outlines the progress already made --and the measures that must still be taken --to develop guidance for the growing, processing, shipping, and marketing of fruits and vegetables by October 1998. The guidance --the first-ever specific safety standards for fruits and vegetables --will address potential food safety problems throughout the production and distribution system and help ensure the sanitation and safety practices of all those seeking to sell produce in the U.S. market. The report also provides both short-and long-term plans for technical assistance, education, and outreach activities to support the appropriate application of the guidance.

Clinton Administration Accomplishments In Improving Food Safety

The President's announcement builds on a strong record of food safety initiatives, ensuring that Americans eat the safest possible food. The Administration has put into place improved safety standards for meat, poultry, and seafood products, and has begun the process of developing enhanced standards for fruit and vegetable juices. The Administration also has expanded research, education, and surveillance activities throughout the food safety system.

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FOOD SAFETY ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE JANUARY 1998

Increased FDA Inspection Authority. On March 4, 1998, the President announced the introduction of legislation by Senators Milkulski and Kennedy to ensure the safety of all imported foods, including fruits and vegetables. This legislation will enhance the Food and Drug Administration's authority to prevent the import of fruits, vegetables, and other food products that do not meet U.S. food safety requirements. This legislation is consistent with the President's announcement last October, calling for increased FDA inspection authority. The President also announced the release of a report that provides a blueprint on how the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) will work cooperatively with the agricultural community to develop guidance on good agricultural and manufacturing practices for fruits and vegetables.

Increased Safety for Juices. In April 1998, the Administration announced two proposed regulations by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to improve the safety of fruit and vegetable juices. The first regulation would require that all fruit and vegetable juice processors implement a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system which will ensure that processors take extra steps to reduce the numbers of microorganisms that may be in their products. (Retailers of packaged juice, as well as processors who sell less than 40,000 gallons of fresh juice per year, would be exempt from this requirement.) The second proposed rule would require any packaged untreated juice to be labeled with a warning statement advising consumers of the potential risks of juice that has not been processed to eliminate dangerous bacteria. This requirement will apply to retail and other processors who package untreated juice for consumption off-site --such as grocery stores that squeeze and bottle juice for home use. But retail sellers of juice for consumption on-site --such as restaurants and children's lemonade stands --will be exempt from this labeling requirement. Although 98 percent of juice sold in the United States is pasteurized, the FDA estimates that there are up to 48,000 juice-related illnesses per year.

Reforming Proposed Rule for Organic Food. On May 8, 1998, the Department of Agriculture announced that it would make fundamental changes to its proposed national organic standards as a result of comments received on the initial proposal. USDA announced that biotechnology, irradiation, and biosolids would not be included in the revised proposal, and food produced with these products and practices would not be allowed to bear the organic label. Before publishing the revised proposal, USDA will evaluate the comments submitted in response to the December 1997 proposal. This record will guide the drafting of the revised proposal, which USDA will issue for public comment later this year.



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10/02/97 11:38:00 AM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc:

Subject: 1997-10/2 remarks by President on food safety

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 2, 1997

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT ON FOOD SAFETY REGULATIONS

The Rose Garden

10:59 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr. Vice President, Secretary Shalala, Deputy Secretary Rominger, Cathie Woteki, Dr. Friedman, all the representatives of the groups that have helped us come to this day.

Our government made a fundamental promise to the American people of a bountiful and safe food supply way back at the beginning of this century. It is a promise that we have had to renew our commitment to periodically over the years, and a promise that needed a lot of work when I became President. From the day I took office, I worked very hard to honor that commitment, to make our food supply -- the world's safest -- even safer.

In 1993, the Vice President's national performance review recommended an overhaul of our food safety procedures so that we could use the best scientific technology available in inspection methods, to make sure that we had put in the best preventive controls to keep our food supply the world's safest.

Since then, we have taken major steps. We first put in place rigorous new safety standards for seafood, meat and poultry products, throwing out archaic and ineffective methods of inspection that had not been updated for nearly a century. We've required

slaughterhouses to test for deadly E. Coli and salmonella bacteria. We've begun developing new safety standards for fruit and vegetable juices. We've strengthened our system of guaranteeing that our drinking water will remain safe, and improved public health protections for pesticide uses on food. And we brought a host of federal agencies together to boost food safety research, education and surveillance efforts around our nation. In so doing, we're using the world's best science to help prevent food contamination tragedies before they happen, to make sure our supply of food is as safe as it can be.

Today, our food supply remains the world's safest, but we can't rest on those accomplishments. We have to do more. At the time when Americans are eating more and more food from around the globe, we must spare no effort to ensure the safety of our food supply from whatever source.

Today, I want to tell you the new steps we're taking to ensure that our fruits and vegetables, including those imported from other countries, meet the highest health and safety standards. First, I'm asking Congress to give the Food and Drug Administration the power and the obligation to ban the importation of fruits, vegetables and other foods from countries whose safety precautions do not meet American standards. This new law would be similar to a law that already requires the United States Department of Agriculture to keep meat and poultry from countries with inferior food safety systems out of our stores.

In my next budget, I will provide enough funds to ensure that the FDA can fully implement this new legislation by dramatically expanding its international food inspection force. With these

efforts, we can make sure that no fruits and vegetables cross our borders, enter our ports, or reach our dinner tables without meeting the same strict standards as those grown here in America. Our food safety system is the strongest in the world, and that's how it's going to stay.

I'm also directing the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Agriculture to work together in close cooperation with the agricultural community to develop the first-ever specific safety standards for the growing, processing, shipping and selling of fruits and vegetables. These standards will address potential food safety problems throughout the production and distribution system, and they'll improve the sanitation and safety practices of all those seeking to sell produce in the United States market.

I'm asking Secretary Shalala and Glickman to report back to me within 90 days with a complete schedule for developing these standards within a year. I'll also ask them to submit a comprehensive plan to improve the monitoring of food safety programs abroad, to help foreign countries upgrade their safety precautions

and toughen food inspections at the border.

Being a parent is perhaps the toughest job in the world. Our parents deserve the peace of mind that comes from knowing the food they set before their children is safe. With today's new actions, we can help make their jobs much easier.

And, again, let me thank all of those who were involved in this effort as I sign this order. Thank you very much.

(The order is signed.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks. (Applause.)

Q Mr. President, will you be using the line item veto

THE PRESIDENT: Excuse me?

Q Will you be using the line item veto on any of the appropriations bills that you've just passed -- that you've just signed?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, let me say, I have received only -- I've received one memorandum for my staff on one bill. And that came in late last night, so I haven't read it. But I will consider it -- as the bills come in, I will ask for a review of the potential uses by specific bill and make judgments as we go along. I have nothing to report at this time, because I have received only one memorandum and I haven't read it.

Q What about the census, sir? Do you have any concerns concerning the Commerce bill and the particular ways that the money will be used for the census?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, my feeling is that we ought to do the census as well as we can. I don't think this is a complicated issue. The National Science Foundation has recommended this statistical sampling method. The man who did President Bush's census says that it's the only way to get the most accurate count. I just want to do whatever the Census Bureau believes, the full-time professionals, believe is the most accurate thing to do.

I think that's a heavy constitutional responsibility we have, to conduct a census that is as accurate as possible based on what the professionals say. This ought to be a professional, not a political judgment. And that's the position I will take throughout.

Q Mr. President, did the Democratic Party send money to the states because of federal election law restrictions?

Q Mr. President, there are fresh fruit and vegetables producers that are saying --

THE PRESIDENT: Well, wait a minute. I'll take both of them. Go ahead first.

Q There are fresh fruit and vegetable producers that are saying that you're acting with this action as the world food police and that your actions here today are unwarranted and that's going to complicate the trade environment.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I hope it doesn't complicate the trade environment. But, you know, it seems to me that we have no higher responsibility than to protect the health and safety of our citizens, and everyone who has been following all of your reporting over the last four or five years knows that we have had continuing challenges in food safety. We have millions of people who get sick every year. And we're not trying to unfairly target foreign producers of food into our market; we don't ask them to meet any standards we don't meet. And indeed, if you look at the actions of this administration over the last four years, when we started, I think you can make a compelling case that we started working on things that were problems coming out of the American market first. So I just don't think that's right.

I don't want it to complicate the trade environment, but I'm not interested in trade in things that will make the American people sick.

Q Mr. President, did the Democratic National Committee send money to the states in order to get around the federal spending limits that went along with accepting federal money for the national campaign, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: It's my understanding that everything the Democratic National Committee did had the prior approval of the lawyers. If they cleared it all in advance, then it was perfectly legal. And when this issue was raised about a year ago, the exact issue, I believe that that was clarified at that time. I'm sure that they had legal advice that they followed, and I believe the Republicans said that they did some of the same things and also had prior legal clearance.

Q Mr. Clinton, do you think that Mrs. Reno -- she's been advised to go forward with the 90-day investigation into the fundraising calls of the Vice President -- and perhaps Mr. Gore would like to comment, too --

THE PRESIDENT: I think that --

Q -- do you feel that the 90-day investigation would be helpful?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, if you read the statute, she can consider certain things in the 90-day period that are not permitted in the 30-day period. But I think this is a legal question and it should be done based on an independent legal review with no pressure from the outside, from me or from anyone else. And that's the way I intend to keep it, at least on my part.

Thank you.

END

11:09 A.M. EDT

Message Sent To: _____

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 2, 1997

October 2, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

SUBJECT: Initiative to Ensure the Safety of Imported and
Domestic Fruits and Vegetables

American consumers today enjoy the safest food supply in the world, and I am proud of my Administration's record in this area. We have taken significant steps to ensure that we maintain the safest food possible. We have put in place improved safety standards for meat, poultry, and seafood products, and we have begun the process of developing enhanced safety standards for fruit and vegetable juices. We have also expanded research, education, and surveillance activities through coordinated efforts of all agencies involved in food safety issues. Together, these measures will greatly improve the safety of the Nation's food supply.

We need to build on these efforts, and today I ask you to do so by focusing on the safety of fruits and vegetables. Although the produce Americans eat is very safe, we can and must do even better, especially at a time when Americans are eating more fruits and vegetables from all over the world. Last year, 38 percent of the fruit and 12 percent of the vegetables consumed by Americans came from overseas. We must ensure that fruits and vegetables coming from abroad are as safe as those produced in the United States, especially as we upgrade our own domestic standards.

To help accomplish this task, I plan to send to the Congress proposed legislation that will require the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to halt imports of fruits, vegetables, or other food from any foreign country whose food safety systems and standards are not on par with those of the United States. This legislation, which will be similar to existing law requiring the USDA to halt the importation of meat and poultry from such countries, will enable the FDA to prevent the importation of potentially unsafe foreign produce. My Fiscal Year 1999 budget will provide the necessary funds to enable the FDA to expand dramatically its international food inspection force. With this greatly increased ability to inspect food safety conditions abroad and at points of

entry, the FDA will be able to determine when to halt the importation of fruits and vegetables from foreign countries.

Today, I hereby direct two administrative actions that will better ensure the safety of fruits and vegetables coming from abroad, while continuing to improve the safety of domestic produce.

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First, I direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in partnership with the Secretary of Agriculture and in close cooperation with the agricultural community, to issue within 1 year from the date of this memorandum, guidance on good agricultural practices and good manufacturing practices for fruits and vegetables. This guidance should address ways to prevent potential sources of contamination, should take into account differences in both crops and regions, and should address food safety issues throughout the food production and distribution system. By providing the first-ever specific safety standards for fruits and vegetables, the guidance will improve the agricultural and manufacturing practices of all those seeking to sell produce in the U.S. market. To ensure that this guidance has the widest possible effect, I also direct the development of coordinated outreach and educational activities.

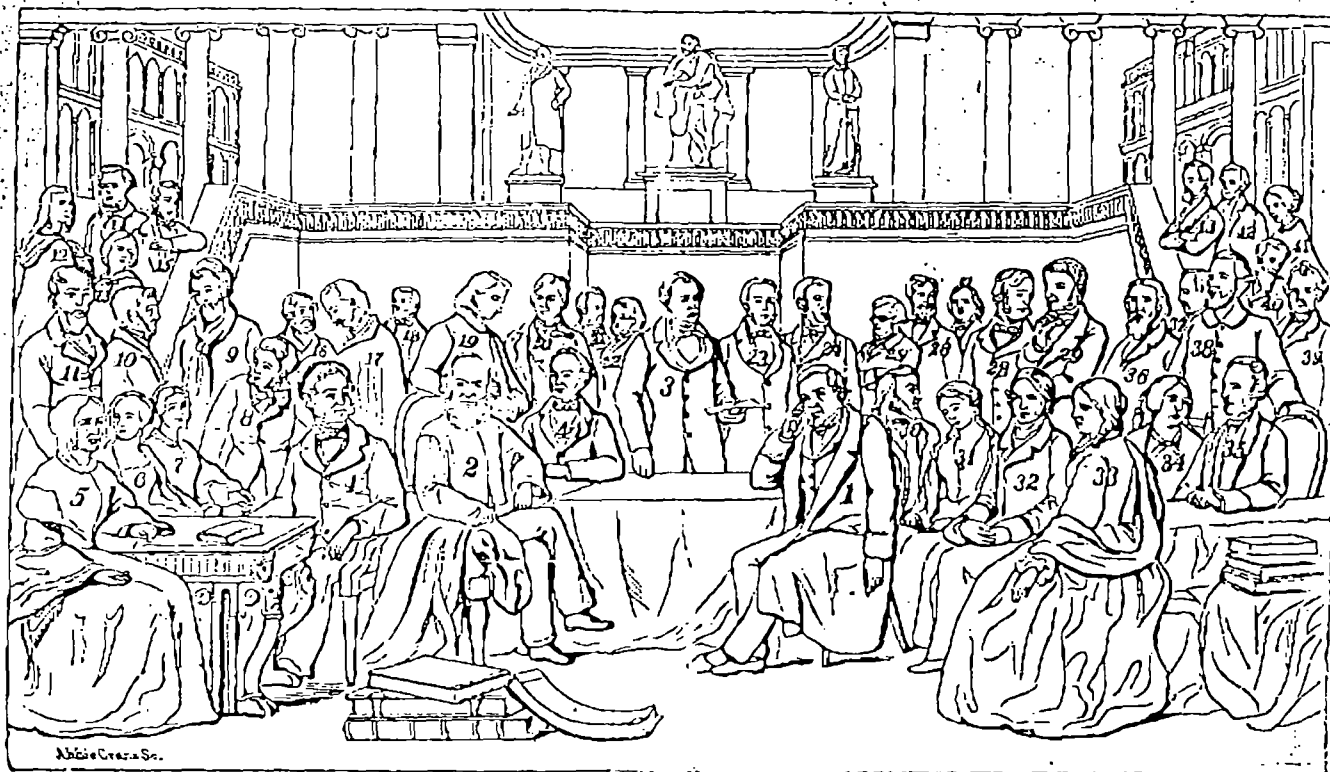
Second, I direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Agriculture, to report back to me within 90 days from the date of this memorandum with a status report and complete schedule for the good agricultural and manufacturing practices, and a plan on how to improve the monitoring of agricultural and manufacturing practices abroad, to assist foreign countries to improve those practices where necessary, and to prevent the importation of unsafe produce, including by detecting unsafe food at the dock or border. I especially urge you to consider the best ways to target inspection and testing toward those areas where problems are most likely to occur.

In addition to taking these actions, you should accelerate whatever food safety research is necessary to support them. You should also call upon the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Labor, and other agencies as necessary to provide you with assistance in achieving this goal. These steps, taken together and in coordination with the proposed legislation I will send to the Congress, will improve the safety of fruits and vegetables for all Americans.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

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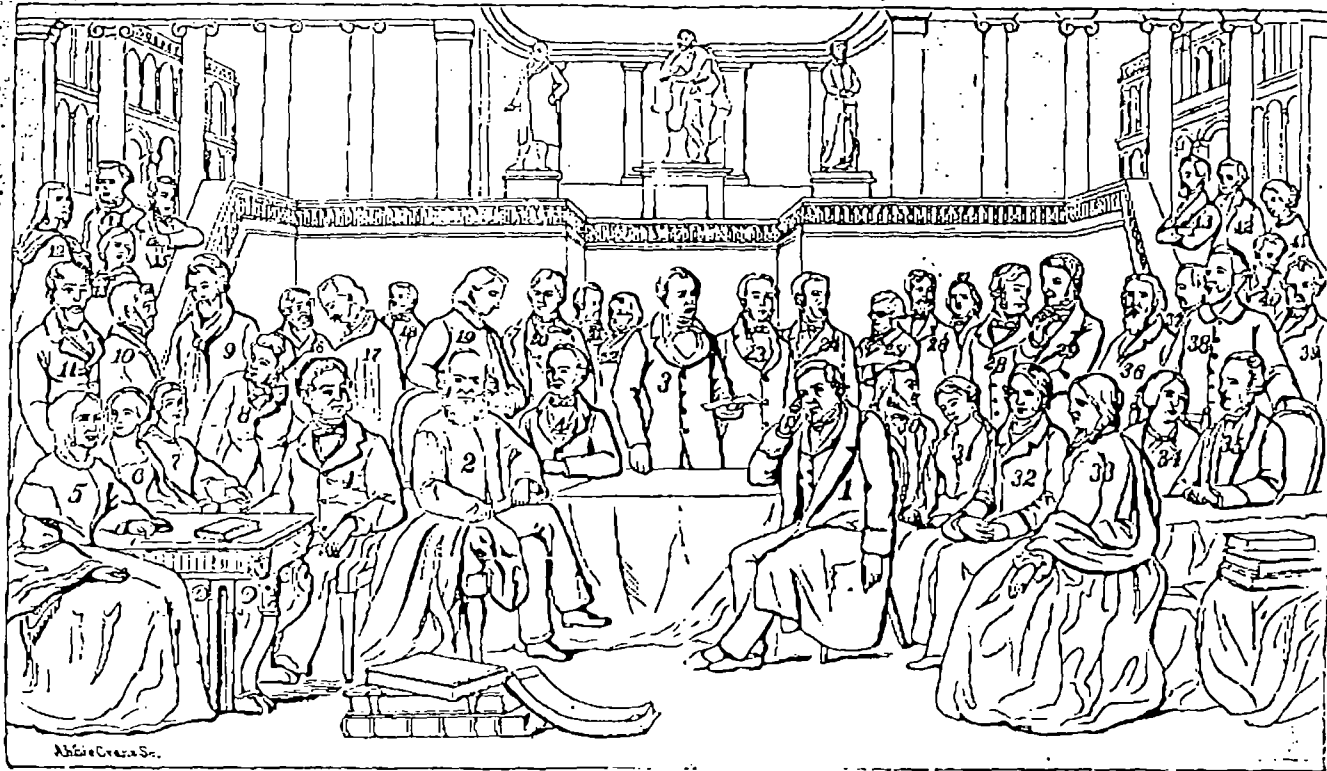
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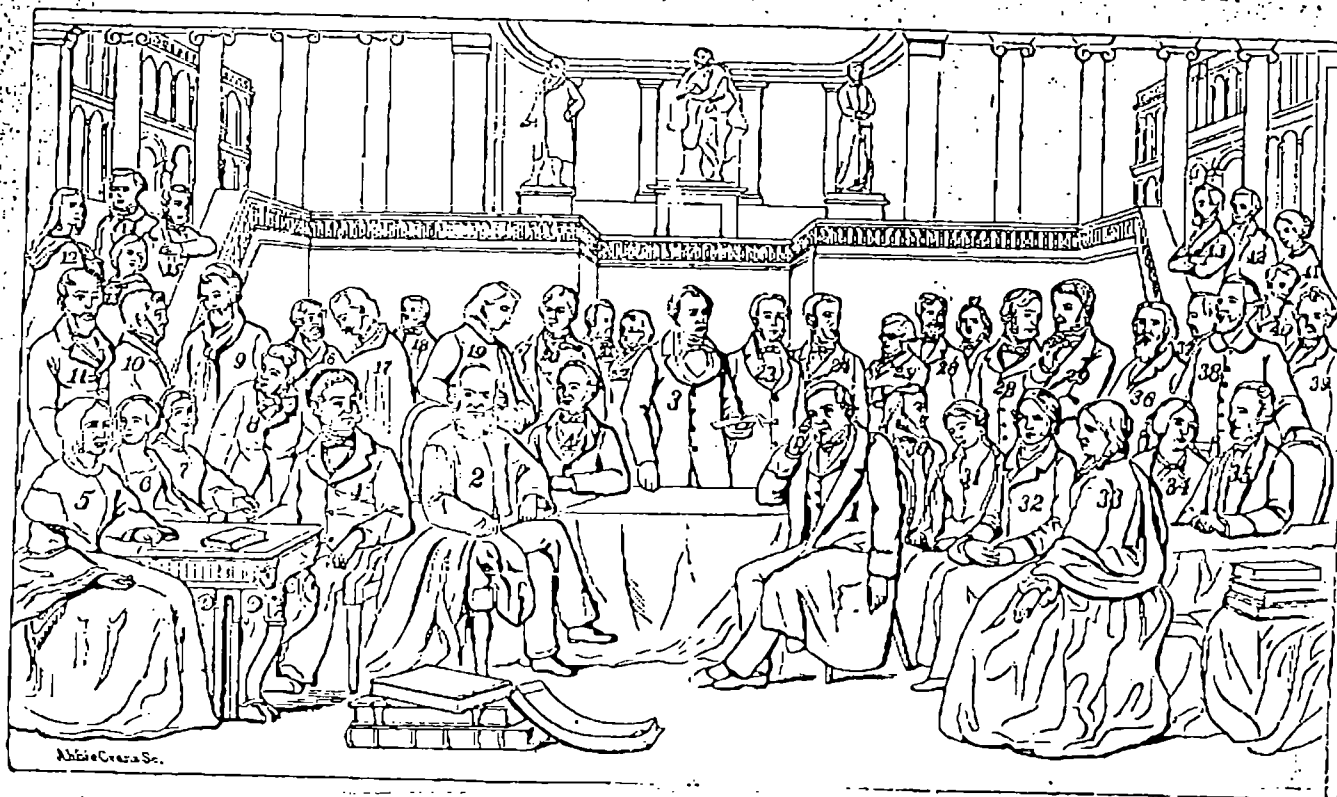
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