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11-8-96

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RADIO ADDRESS
BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE NATION
July 6, 1996
The Oval Office

Good morning. This holiday weekend we celebrate America's birthday and the values that hold us together as a community and a country. It's a time for family and fun, for games and fireworks and backyard barbecues.

Tonight, smoke will curl over homes on nearly every block as millions of families gather around the grill for the most American of meals: hamburgers and hot dogs and barbecued chicken.

Today I want to talk to you about the steps we're taking to make sure the food we cook in backyard barbecues is safe and wholesome. Our families have every right to expect the food they serve their children is safe. They have every right to expect the world's most bountiful food supply will also be the world's safest. And, in fact, our food is very safe.

Nearly a century ago, after muckrakers exposed dirty conditions in meat-packing plants, we made a national commitment to protect the public from unsafe food. It was one of the first ways we came together to meet the challenges of that new industrial age.

Last year, we put in place new safety precautions for seafood. And in recent years, we've learned that we all must continue to be vigilant on meat and poultry safety, and we learned it the hard way. For, every year, scores of Americans still die and tens of thousands become sick from eating meat or poultry that is contaminated with harmful bacteria.

We all remember how, in 1993, tragedy struck hundreds of families in the western United States. Undercooked hamburgers served in a fast food restaurant were contaminated with a deadly strain of E. coli bacterial. Five hundred people became ill and four children died.

The parents of many of the E. coli victims turned their grief into a determination to help others. Some of them are here with me today. In the face of this unspeakable tragedy, they had one insistent question: How could this have happened? I asked that question too, and I asked my administration: What can we do to prevent it from happening again?

Now, sometimes food makes us sick because it's undercooked. But sometimes, families have been exposed to illnesses because some meat and poultry shipped to our supermarket shelves contained invisible and deadly bacteria. The reason was shocking and simple: For all our technological advances, the way we inspect meat and poultry had not changed in 90 years. Even though we know that killers such as salmonella can only be seen with a microscope, inspectors were still checking on meat and poultry by look, touch, smell. We relied on an overworked cadre of government inspectors, rather than working with the industry and challenging it to keep food safe.

Under the direction of Vice President Gore and Secretary Glickman, the United States Department of Agriculture has worked with industry, scientists, farmers, parents and consumers to completely revamp our meat and poultry inspection system, to revolutionize the way our nation protects food safety.

This morning, I want to announce the major changes that the U.S. Department of Agriculture will take to keep food safe and to protect our children from deadly bacteria.

First, we're challenging every meat-packing plant in America to do scientific tests or take other safety precautions at every step of production. Each company must design and put in place its own tough plan. We're not imposing a detailed list of dos and don'ts. We're working with industry as partners, challenging them to find ways to make our meat the safest it can be. Each plant will be held accountable for meeting high standards at every step of the process.

Second, we're insisting that every slaughterhouse begin to conduct rigorous scientific tests to make sure the meat is not contaminated with deadly strains of E. coli and salmonella bacteria.

Third, companies will have to improve their sanitation procedures. All too often, food is contaminated because simple sanitary rules are not followed.

All these changes will be phased in over the coming months to make sure they are done right. These new meat and poultry contamination safeguards will be the strongest ever. They are flexible and they do challenge the private sector to take responsibility. They also use the most up-to-date science to track down invisible threats. They protect the public without tangling business in red tape.

Parents should know that when they serve a chicken dinner they're not putting their children at risk. Parents should know that when a teenager borrows the car to get a fast food hamburger, the hamburger should be the least of their worries. Our new food safety initiative will give families the security to know that the food they eat is as safe as it can be.

To be sure, parents will also still have to take responsibility. There is no way to make food entirely free from risk; nature simply won't let us. So everyone should follow warning labels, be careful how you handle raw meat and poultry, and make sure it's well cooked before you serve it to your family. These days families have enough to worry about. They shouldn't have to fear the food they eat is unsafe. With the tough steps we're taking today, America's parents should be able to breathe a little easier.

Have a safe and happy Fourth of July weekend.

Please enclose copy
of July 6 Radio Address.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

called Jan for
address 8/6/96
4:10 p

August 6, 1996

Darin Detwiler
296 Sudden Valley
Bellingham, Washington 98226

Dear Darin:

Thanks for your kind e-mail message. I'm sorry you were unable to attend the radio address last month, but please know that you, Vicky and Riley were in all our thoughts. As President and as a parent, I'm very grateful for all your good work which has helped us to revolutionize the way our nation protects food safety.

I hope to have the chance to see you again someday soon.

Sincerely,



PHOTOCOPY
WJC HANDWRITING

MC 7/23
THANK YOU
M. Lewis

Murphy
Nice reply

From DVDET@aol.com Sat Jul 6 13:10:21 1996
Date: Sat, 06 Jul 1996 13:09:11 -0400
Subject: Thank you
To: president@WhiteHouse.GOV
Message-id: <960706130910_350487479@emout10.mail.aol.com>

Darin

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738-3850

(360)

Dear Mr. President:

In February of 1993, you spoke to my wife and I via satellite during the "Electronic Town Meeting." Our son, Riley, was in the Seattle Children's Hospital as a result of the E.coli outbreak in the Pacific Northwest, where he died only a week later.

First, thank you for the phone call and for the letter you sent. It was an honor to have received condolences from you and your wife. Also, we wish to thank members of your administration for working with us. We spoke before Vice President Gore and members of the health care task force, and have spent much time working with USDA Secretaries **Espy** and Glickman.

Thank you for your announcement today about the HACCP program. I hope that this does prove to be successful. I am sorry to have not had the opportunity to actually speak with you in person. We had hoped to be present this week for the announcements and for your radio address, but things did not work in our favor.

Again, thank you for your personal words after Riley died, and thank you for your many efforts on the issue of food safety. Best wishes for you and your

family, and good luck in the elections.

Darin Detwiler