

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
“Import Safety: Status of FDA’s Screening Efforts at the Border”
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
April 13, 2011

FDA’s ability to protect the American public is an important topic for oversight. The agency is responsible for ensuring the safety of food, drugs, and medical devices, and if FDA does not do its job, lives are at stake.

In the official hearing memo for today’s hearing on the safety of imports, the right questions are posed. What are FDA’s solutions for enhancing the screening of imported food, drugs, and medical devices? What is FDA doing to improve its IT infrastructure for risk-based screening? How can FDA better ensure the safety of imported products?

But there is an enormous disconnect between these questions and what is happening in Congress this week. GAO report after GAO report tells us that improving the safety of our food and drugs requires that we provide FDA with more funding and resources. Yet we are doing exactly the opposite.

Just last week, Rep. Paul Ryan introduced the Republican budget for Fiscal Year 2012. The House will soon be voting on this proposal. While there’s not a lot of detail in the budget, there is enough to know what it would mean for FDA: Republicans propose to roll back discretionary funding for all federal agencies to FY 2008 levels.

What would this mean? In the case of FDA, it would mean that the agency budget would be reduced by \$600 million – a budget cut of almost 20%. This Republican budget would require a dramatic reduction in FDA’s funding to keep the food and drug supply safe.

The result would be the reverse of what the American people want: fewer inspections and more adulterated and dangerous food and drugs.

Mr. Chairman, when I read the Republican budget and then look at the topic of today’s hearings, I’m reminded of an old Yiddish term: chutzpah. Roughly translated, it means someone who’s got a lot of nerve.

It takeschutzpah to haul the FDA Commissioner up here and grill her about why FDA is not doing more to keep the food and drug supply safe ... while simultaneously passing a budget that takes away the resources she needs to do her job.

And it takeschutzpah for Republicans on this Subcommittee to complain that FDA is not doing enough about food safety when the majority of them voted against the Food Safety Modernization Act, the first expansion of FDA's food safety authorities in 70 years.

Commissioner Hamburg, I appreciate you coming today. I am looking forward to your testimony, and I look forward to working with you to ensure that FDA has the tools and the budget to continue doing its job.