

For Immediate Release

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## **Government Officials Applaud Expansion of Education Campaign**

**September 18, 2007** – Washington, D.C. – United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Mike Johanns and United States Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Andrew von Eschenbach joined other high-ranking government officials on Capitol Hill today to recognize the Partnership for Food Safety Education's (PFSE) expansion of the Be Food Safe campaign. Originally launched by the USDA last fall, the campaign actively engages food safety educators and retailers across the country to promote safe food handling messages among consumers.

The event sets the stage for an aggressive food safety education effort to help reduce incidence of foodborne illness. While the overall rate of foodborne illness is declining, research shows that one in four Americans suffer from foodborne illness each year.

Officials praised the Be Food Safe retail campaign, which will empower retailers to deliver core food safety messages ("Clean, Cook, Separate, Chill") through a bold new graphics platform. "Be Food Safe is a perfect example of an effective public-private initiative that can make a real difference in the health of American consumers," said USDA Secretary Johanns. "As the Partnership continues to engage the nation's retailers, this new campaign will give Americans compelling visual reminders of the importance of proper food handling to reducing risk of illness."

### **Empowering Consumers**

Results from the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends, 2007 report reveal that consumer confidence in food safety provided by the industry has declined. In research conducted in March 2007 by PFSE consumers indicated that they believed it was "very important" to educate the public on safe food handling, with most believing that food companies and the government should provide this information. Be Food Safe retailers represent 5,200 stores in 46 states reaching an estimated 81 million consumers with consistent reminders about how to safely handle food to reduce their risk. These food retailers will bring

Be Food Safe messages to their customers through in-store signage, brochures, flyers, packaging and circular ads, among other materials.

Twenty-six different retailers are now signed on, and the list is expected to grow. Participating retailers include Acme Markets, Albertson's LLC, Associated Food Stores, Inc., Atlantic Food Mart, Big Y Foods, Inc., Brown & Cole Stores, Buehlers Fresh Foods, Fairview Foods / Piggly Wiggly, Fiesta Mart, Food Lion LLC, Giant Food, Giant Eagle Inc., Hannaford Bros. Co, Highland Park Market, Kings Super Markets Inc., Lund Food Holdings, Meijer, Inc., Publix Super Markets, Inc., Roundy's Supermarkets, Inc., Save Mart Supermarkets, Schnuck Markets, ShopRite, Stop & Shop Supermarkets, Sweetbay Supermarket, Soelberg's Market, Weis Markets, Inc., and the Defense Commissary Agency (DECA).

Taking place during National Food Safety Education month, September, speakers also included Senator Robert P. Casey (D-PA) and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT). De Lauro, Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture and Related Agencies, commended the Partnership for its unique track record. "The Partnership's demonstrated ability to unite government, nonprofit, consumer and industry organizations to educate consumers and help reduce the risk of foodborne illness provides a critical model for success," said DeLauro. "Through the Partnership we see what is possible when we work together toward a common goal and I welcome the Partnership's continuing efforts in the years to come," she continued.

### **Expanding Food Safety Education Participation**

"The Partnership recognizes that everyone in the food system has an important part to play in ensuring the safety of our food supply," said Partnership for Food Safety Education Chairman Bryan Silberman. "Our 10-year cooperative efforts with government, industry, consumer, public health and scientific organizations have led to improved levels of consumer awareness about basic safe food handling practices, and adding the reach of retailers and their suppliers to the PFSE's message communication will significantly increase consumer awareness of this important information."

Food Marketing Institute President Tim Hammonds added, "Food retailers across the country are eager to help communicate critical food safety messages to their customers in the store environment. The Be Food Safe campaign is an important tool for grocers in their efforts to achieve the highest standards of safety and quality."

The event marks the 10th Anniversary of the Partnership for Food Safety Education, a collaboration between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, industry and professional associations and consumer non-profit organizations. It included a salute to the role that state and community organizations play in creating and disseminating unique programs based on the four core safe

handling messages.

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The Partnership for Food Safety Education unites industry associations, professional societies in food science, nutrition and health, consumer groups and the United States Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency and from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration, to educate the public about safe food handling and preparation. The Partnership, a non-profit organization, is the creator and steward of the Fight BAC!® campaign, a food safety education program developed using scientifically based recommendations and resulting from an extensive consumer research process. Fight BAC!® materials are fully accessible online at [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org) and utilized by consumers, teachers, dietitians, public health officials and extension agents across the United States.

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