

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 309

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding strategies to better protect millions of Americans with food allergies from potentially fatal allergic reactions, and to further assure the safety of manufactured food from inadvertent allergen contamination.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 28, 1999

Mrs. MORELLA submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Commerce

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding strategies to better protect millions of Americans with food allergies from potentially fatal allergic reactions, and to further assure the safety of manufactured food from inadvertent allergen contamination.

Whereas up to 5.2 million Americans have potentially lethal food allergies, and the incidence is increasing yearly;

Whereas an estimated 125 deaths per year result from fatal allergic reactions to food in the United States;

Whereas the majority of those affected by food allergies are children, but the most serious allergies—peanuts, shellfish, fish, and tree nuts—are lifelong;

Whereas eight major allergens—peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, eggs, milk, soy, and wheat—comprise 90 percent of allergic reactions;

Whereas at present no vaccine or allergy injection treatment exists for serious food allergies—only a lifetime of absolute avoidance of the allergen prevents potentially fatal anaphylactic reaction;

Whereas the expectation of a safe food supply for all is an American right;

Whereas the prevalence and seriousness of food allergies is well-known and documented to the food manufacturing and processing industry;

Whereas potentially fatal allergen ingredients may actually be introduced into the manufacturing process by the practice of “sharing” production lines with allergen and non-allergen containing products, a practice typically unknown to the consumer, and that this dangerous practice is avoidable;

Whereas the current practice of labeling foods for potential allergens is helpful, but not a substitute for preventing the contamination of the product in the first place, and is of no benefit to a child or adult consuming a contaminated product which is not in its factory wrapper, or while in a restaurant or another home; and

Whereas previous threats to the public safety and confidence as a result of product tampering and poisonings have already set a precedent for undertaking improvements in manufacturing processes to better protect the American public from similarly grave and preventable risk, and at acceptable cost: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Rep-
2 representatives that—

3 (1) major commercial food processors and pro-
4 ducers should resolve to the greatest extent possible
5 to produce products containing key life-threatening
6 allergens on separate, dedicated manufacturing lines;

7 (2) labelled ingredient listings, such as “natural
8 flavors” or “vegetable protein” or other similar
9 terms, should specify their allergenic ingredients
10 clearly by name if those ingredients are key aller-
11 gens (e.g., “Natural flavors (includes peanuts)”);

12 (3) allergens should be identified in terms un-
13 derstandable to average citizens (such as “includes
14 milk products” rather than “includes casein”);

15 (4) foods which are common, life-threatening al-
16 lergens should not be added gratuitously to products
17 where their contribution to taste is negligible, and
18 where their presence would not reasonably be ex-
19 pected (e.g., shrimp extract in frozen beef teriyaki,
20 or pecans in packaged raspberry cookies);

21 (5) industry, consumer, and scientific groups
22 should voluntarily work together for the purpose of
23 better educating food industry workers and the pub-
24 lic on the issues of food allergy safety; and

1 (6) an assessment of the impact and success of
2 these initiatives should be made not later than one
3 year after the date of adoption of this resolution and
4 reported to the resolution's sponsors.

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