

# HEALTH

## Food Lobby Killed Tougher Rules

**For tracking foodborne illnesses**

(AP) -- One of the worst outbreaks of foodborne illness in the U.S. is teaching the food industry the truth of the adage, "Be careful what you wish for because you might get it."

The industry pressured the Bush administration years ago to limit the paperwork companies would have to keep to help U.S. health investigators quickly trace produce that sickens consumers, according to interviews and government reports reviewed by The Associated Press.

The White House also killed a plan to require the industry to maintain electronic tracking records that could be reviewed easily during a crisis to search for an outbreak's source. Companies complained the proposals were too burdensome and costly, and

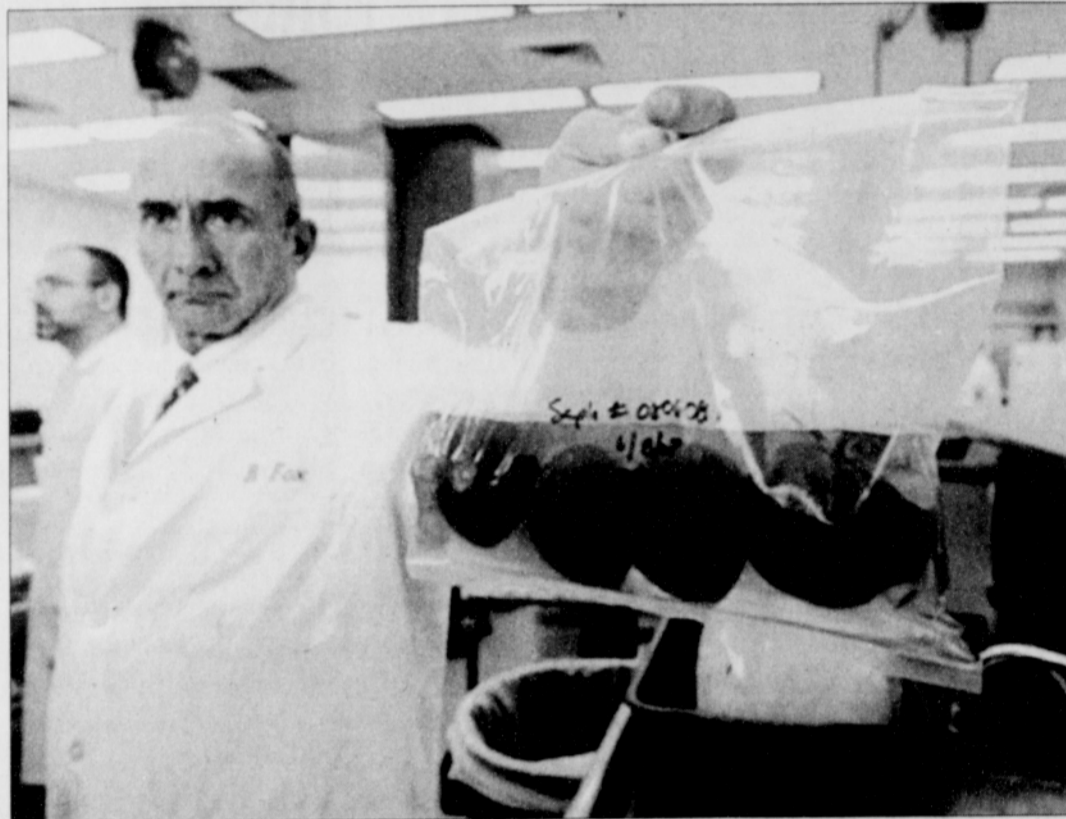
warned they could disrupt the availability of consumers' favorite foods.

The apparent but unintended consequences of the lobbying success: a paper record-keeping system that has slowed investigators, with estimated business losses of \$250 million. So far, nearly 1,300 people in 43 states, the District of Columbia and Canada have been sickened by salmonella since April.

Investigators initially focused on tomatoes as a culprit. Now they are turning attention to jalapeno peppers.

A former member of Bush's Cabinet and three former senior officials in the Food and Drug Administration told the AP that government food safety experts did not get the strong record-keeping and trace-back system originally proposed under a bioterrorism law to cope with a major foodborne illness.

"In retrospect, yes, if they (the regulations) had been broader



Mark Roh, U.S. Food and Drug Administration's acting regional director, holds a bag of tomatoes being tested for salmonella bacteria at FDA's southwest regional research lab, in Irvine, Calif. (AP photo)

and a bit more far-reaching, it could have helped with this," said Robert Brackett, senior vice president of the Grocery Manufacturers Association. "It wouldn't have hurt, for sure." Brackett formerly was a top safety official at the FDA.

Under pressure in 2003 and 2004, the White House agreed to dilute record-keeping proposals by FDA safety experts.

"If the FDA had been given the resources and authority years ago that it asked for to solve these kinds of problems, I think we would have solved this already," said William Hubbard, a former FDA associate commissioner.

Tommy Thompson, who was health secretary during the industry's lobbying campaign, acknowledged that a more robust food-tracking system — opposed by business groups as too expensive — could have helped stem the current illnesses and business losses.

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### HEALTH WATCH

**Medicare Options Explained** -- If you are confused by Medicare, Mt. Hood Community College can help with a free class called "Welcome to Medicare." The course will be offered on Thursday, Aug. 14 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the MHCCC Bruning Center, 1484 N.W. Civic Dr. in Gresham. A second session will be held Saturday, Aug. 16 from 10 a.m. to noon in Room 1266 on the MHCC campus.

**"Vegetarian Dessert Heaven"** -- Thursday, Aug. 7, from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Mt. Hood Community College will offer a course teaching the art of cooking low fat and cholesterol-free nutritious and delicious dessert; \$34 fee. To register, call 503-491-7572.

**Infant CPR** -- Monday, Aug. 11, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., this class will teach families how to perform rescue breathing, CPR and choking maneuvers for infants 1 to 12 months old; \$34 fee. For more information and to register, call 503-574-6595.

**Welcome to Medicare** -- Thursday, Aug. 14, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday, Aug. 16, from 10 a.m. to noon, Mt. Hood Community College will provide the free classes explaining the fundamentals of Medicare allowing new recipients to make informed decisions regarding various options available; to register call 503-491-7572.

**Newborn Care and Feeding for Multiples-Two Session Class** -- Saturday, Aug. 16 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, Aug. 17 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., this class series is designed for parents expecting two or

more babies teaching the basics of feeding, caring and establishing routines. To register, call 503-574-6595.

**Newborn Care** -- Saturday, Aug. 16 from noon to 5 p.m., expectant parents get a complete look at preparing for the new arrival, topics include bathing, diapering, safety and answers to common questions; \$45 fee per couple. To register, call 503-574-6595

**Bereavement Support Groups** -- Free, safe confidential group meetings for those who have experienced the death of a loved one offered on various nights and locations. For information and registration, call 503-215-4622.

**Mammography Screening** -- Early detection is a key factor in the prevention of breast cancer. Call 503-251-6137 to schedule your high-tech, soft-touch mammogram.

**Cancer Resource Center** -- Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the American Red Cross have joined forces to create the first in-hospital resource center providing books, printed material, computer access and more for individuals and families dealing with cancer. The center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Free Body Basics** -- This physician recommended class is appropriate for all ages and health conditions. Plan to attend this one-session class and learn the simple guidelines for safe exercises, including stretching. Call 503-256-4000 to register.

**Parenting Classes** -- Newborns don't come with instruction manuals but parents and

parents-to-be can learn about a variety of topics from pain and childbirth to breastfeeding to infant CPR and much more. For a schedule of events, call 503-574-6595 or visit: providence.org/classes.

**Heart Talk Support Group meets** -- on the second Monday of each month; from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, call 503-251-6260.

**Maternity Water Workout** -- Helping new moms regain muscle tone, strength, and flexibility, all in the support and freedom of the water. Call 503-256-4000 for more information.

**Cardiac-Rehab Exercise Classes** -- A medically supervised exercise program for people dealing with heart conditions. For more information, call 503-251-6260.

**Osteoporosis Screening** -- An ultrasound bone density screening with personalized education; fee \$30. To schedule an appointment, call 503-261-6611.

**Stroke Alert Screening** -- Check your carotid arteries with a painless ultrasound to assess your risk. Fee \$40. To schedule a screening, call 503-251-6137.

**Leg Alert Screening** -- Check for peripheral arterial disease with this safe, simple screening using ankle and arm blood pressure. The fee is \$40. To schedule an appointment, call 503-251-6137.

**Managing Chronic Hepatitis C** -- Third Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m., the informative session led by a registered nurse to help manage side effects of medications and dosage preparations and administration; doctors referral required. To register, call 503-251-6313.

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**Chronic Pain Support Group** -- meets the first Wednesday at 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and the third Wednesday of each month, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call 503-256-4000.  
**Smoke-Free Support Group** -- meets Mondays, 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, call 503-256-4000.

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