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NEWS RELEASE

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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Washington, D.C. — Amid pressure from Congressional leaders, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today announced it will not proceed with reorganization plans that include the closing of seven FDA labs across the country.

In June, Reps. John D. Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and Bart Stupak (D-MI), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation, opened an investigation into FDA's plan to close the labs. Dingell and Stupak expressed particular concern over the closing of the only FDA facility capable of detecting radiological contaminants in food products.

Stupak further acted to prevent the lab closings by offering an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2008 Agriculture Appropriations bill. The amendment prohibits the FDA from closing its field labs or district offices. The appropriations bill was passed by the House earlier this month with Stupak's amendment included.

"These labs are an essential part of protecting consumers and ensuring the safety of our nation's food and drug supply," said Dingell. "The daily reports of unsafe products from China and elsewhere highlight the need for keeping the labs open and tightening our inspection process. When Congress reconvenes we will introduce legislation to provide the resources and authorities FDA needs to protect Americans."

"I am pleased that scrutiny from the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, as well as the inclusion of my amendment in the agriculture appropriations bill, pressured the FDA to abandon its ill-conceived reorganization plan," said Stupak. "As concerns about food safety mount, the FDA's proposal to close its field labs, merge its district offices and concentrate more power in Washington represented exactly the wrong approach. In fact, if it had been implemented, the FDA's plan could have put the American public health at an even greater risk."

"While today's announcement is good news for the American people, more still must be done," added Stupak. "Going forward, as Chairman of Oversight and Investigations, I will continue to pressure the FDA to step up food and drug safety enforcement. Chairman Dingell and I plan to introduce legislation in September that will begin to repair our nation's badly frayed food safety net."

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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