HEALTH: SENATE HELP COMMITTEE ADDRESSES FDA USER FEES

On Thursday, July 28, 2011, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee held a hearing on “FDA User Fees: Advancing Public Health.” The only witness was: Dr. Margaret Hamburg, Commissioner of Food and Drugs at the Food and Drug Administration.

This was the Committee’s first hearing focused on user fees in the upcoming fifth reauthorization of the Prescription Drug User Fee Act (PDUFA), also referred to as “PDUFA V,” and the third reauthorization of the Medical Device User Fee Act (MDUFA), also referred to as “MDUFA III.”

The day before the hearing, the Committee’s Chairman and Ranking Member Senators Tom Harkin (IA) and Mike Enzi (WY) released a joint statement expressing their commitment to a bipartisan reauthorization process, stating: “These laws authorize the FDA to collect fees from manufacturers to expedite the process of approving drugs and medical devices, and play a critically important role in ensuring that they reach the American public in a timely way. We are committed to working together in a bipartisan fashion to reauthorize the drug and device user fees acts as well as authorize generic and biosimilar user fees if the industry can reach a user fee agreement with FDA.” The Senators have asked Commissioner Hamburg and the industry to deliver the user fee agreements to Congress by the end of 2011, so that the Committee can markup the reauthorization legislation in the spring of 2012.

Dr. Hamburg testified that in July 2010 FDA developed a set of potential proposed enhancements for PDUFA V, which were the subject of discussions and negotiations with industry and public stakeholders. Those efforts were concluded this year and enhancements are now under internal review at FDA. Regarding MDUFA, FDA has been holding discussions with the regulated industry since January 2011 to develop a package of proposed recommendations for MDUFA reauthorization. Once FDA has finalized its draft package, it will be open to public comment before FDA’s submission of MDUFA recommendations to Congress in January 2012, she testified.
The hearing focused on FDA’s track record on drug and device approval and its ability in the future to ensure that new products and devices are approved expeditiously, while ensuring efficacy and safety. Some of the issues raised include:

- why FDA approval times have grown in some cases, despite the initiation of industry user fees to improve the approval process timeline and whether FDA is using the user fees effectively and efficiently;
- why Europe and other developed countries approve drugs and devices that FDA will not approve and whether U.S. manufacturers are choosing not to seek FDA approval because of the obstacles they face in the U.S.;
- whether FDA rules regarding conflicts of interests are overly restrictive and prevent it from obtaining the best expert advice available during the approval process; and
- whether the delays in approval are a result of FDA changing its requirements during the approval process or because of the poor quality of applications.

Sens. Harkin and Enzi have said they will work on preparing one bipartisan bill reauthorizing the drug and device user fee programs, authorizing new generic and biosimilar user fee programs, reauthorizing the pediatric drug testing laws, and making a small number of additional policy changes related to the FDA, potentially including supply chain integrity measures and measures related to the medical device review process.

For further information, go to: http://help.senate.gov.

ECONOMY: HOUSE COMMITTEE REVIEWS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION


Witnesses included: John Fernandez, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development, U.S. Department of Commerce; William Shear, Director, Financial Markets and Community Investment, U.S. Government Accountability Office; Steve Etcher, Executive Director, Boonslick Regional Planning Commission, National Association of Development Organizations; David Spaur, President, Merced (CA) County Economic Development Corporation; and David Baker, Senior Vice President, FutureFuel Corporation.

The hearing focused on how the EDA’s programs create jobs and how job creation can be maximized. The EDA was created to alleviate conditions of substantial and persistent unemployment in economically distressed areas. In particular, EDA programs are intended to help local communities attract private sector investment to maximize job creation. EDA does this primarily by leveraging other investment. EDA provides grants for projects through a variety of programs including: planning; technical assistance; public works; economic adjustment; trade adjustment assistance; and research and evaluation.

In March of 2011, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report on economic development programs at four agencies – the Departments of Commerce (Commerce), Housing and Urban
Development (HUD), the Small Business Administration (SBA) and Agriculture (USDA). The GAO found fragmentation and overlaps among many of these programs.

In previous studies, GAO recommended specific “collaborative” practices agencies should consider implementing to streamline their programs and effectively leverage resources. These suggestions included: leveraging physical and administrative resources; establishing compatible policies and procedures; monitoring collaboration; and reinforcing agency accountability for collaborative efforts through strategic annual performance plans.

While the GAO found that the agencies had taken some actions toward implementing these recommendations, it still found there had not been much improvement in streamlining policies and procedures and leveraging resources among agencies. In addition, with regards to EDA in particular, the GAO raised concerns about the number of jobs it created.

“In its report, the GAO identified 80 programs in four different departments that did some form of economic development, including eight EDA programs,” said Chairman Denham. “The GAO found that these programs could be working better together to improve their service to their customers.”

Chairman Denham also acknowledged the input from his local community at the hearing. Mr. Spaur, President of the Merced County Economic Development Corporation, highlighted the unemployment rates in his area that range from 17% – 28%. He stressed the importance of the EDA in creating jobs and improving local economies and how critical it is that the EDA streamline its policies.

For more information, visit: http://transportation.house.gov/

IMMIGRATION: HOUSE JUDICIARY ADDRESSES PROSECUTORIAL DISCRETION IN IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

On July 26, the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration Policy and Enforcement, chaired by Rep. Elton Gallegly (Simi Valley) held a hearing on H.R. 2497, the "Hinder the Administration's Legalization Temptation Act (the ‘HALT’ Act)." Witnesses were: Mr. Chris Crane, President, National ICE Council 118 of the American Federation of Government Employees; Ms. Jessica Vaughan, Policy Director, Center for Immigration Studies; and Ms. Margaret Stock, Adjunct Professor, University of Alaska Anchorage.

H.R. 2497 is aimed at rescinding two recent U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) issued two directives on the scope of Department of Homeland Security’s officers’ prosecutorial discretion in detaining and removing illegal immigrants. According to Judiciary Committee documents, the ICE memos tell agency officials when to exercise “prosecutorial discretion,” such as when to defer the removal of immigrants, when not to stop, question, arrest or detain an immigrant, and when to dismiss a removal proceeding. The directives also tell officials not to seek to remove illegal immigrants who have been present in the U.S. illegally for many years.

In an opening statement, Judiciary Committee Chairman Lamar Smith, sponsor of the House bill, called the policy “backdoor amnesty” and said: “DHS’s plan to open the door to mass administrative amnesty is a rejection of Congress’ constitutional rights and shows utter disdain towards the wishes of the American people.”

Rep. Zoe Lofgren (San Jose), Ranking Member on the Subcommittee, took exception to Smith’s characterization and said the bill is a political overreaction that would take away the same prosecutorial discretion that has been available to previous presidential administrations.

Mr. Crane testified in support of the bill, stating that the prosecutorial discretion memorandum issued by ICE cannot be effectively applied in the field and has the potential to either completely overwhelm ICE’s limited manpower resources or result in the indiscriminate and large scale release of aliens encountered in all ICE law enforcement operations. . . .
Ms. Stock, however, opposed the bill. Acknowledging that the U.S. immigration system is dysfunctional, she stated that the HALT Act would overturn many discretionary authorities that now function as safety valves within the increasingly complex and dysfunctional immigration system. She cited over a dozen potential unintended consequences of the bill. For instance, she testified, the Act would prevent the parole into the United States of many small children in humanitarian circumstances or of victims of child or spousal abuse, and the issuance of a short-term visa for a victim of war with the opportunity to receive U.S. medical treatment. The Act would also suspend the President’s authority to designate Temporary Protective Status for countries suffering disasters, such as hurricanes and the like, Stock said.

For the testimony of all the witnesses, go to: http://judiciary.house.gov.

**SCIENCE: HOUSE DISCUSSES MERIT REVIEW PROCESS AND SCIENCE FUNDING**

On Tuesday, July 26, 2011 the Research and Science Education Subcommittee of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee held a hearing titled "The Merit Review Process: Ensuring Limited Federal Resources are Invested in the Best Science." The purpose of the hearing was to examine the merit review grant award process and its effect on federally funded scientific research, in an effort to understand the strengths and potential weaknesses of the process. Witnesses included: Cora Marrett, Deputy Director, National Science Foundation; Keith R. Yamamoto; Vice Chancellor for Research, University of California at San Francisco; Nancy B. Jackson, President, American Chemical Society and Jorge Jose, Vice President for Research, Indiana University.

A number of federal agencies, from the Department of Energy to the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation, use various types of peer or merit review to evaluate proposals and make recommendations to award federal funds. The National Science Foundation (NSF) has three funding mechanisms: grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts. NSF makes merit-based grant awards to researchers, educators, and students. In Fiscal Year 2010, NSF received 55,542 proposals and awarded 12,996 grants, a 23 percent funding rate. Fifty percent of its budget was devoted to new and continuing grants. Approximately 96 percent of NSF grant proposals are evaluated through an external review process, commonly known as the NSF merit review process.

According to NSF, the process utilizes subject matter experts to review proposals through the mail, in-person at a panel review, or through a combination of both (early-concept grants, rapid response grants, and small conferences and workshops are evaluated through an internal merit review process). The NSF merit review process evaluates proposals based on two criteria, intellectual merit and broader impacts. A National Science Board Task Force is currently examining the two criteria and a report is forthcoming. Since 2007, NSF has also been promoting potentially transformative concepts through additional language added to the intellectual merit criteria.

Mr. Yamamoto testified on behalf of the University of California, San Francisco. Mr. Yamamoto has been active at the University, researching the federal merit review system for the evaluation of biomedical and biological research grant applications, especially those overseen by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF). In his testimony, Mr. Yamamoto: (1) described the key operational and organizational features of the merit review process for biomedical and biological research; (2) assessed how well that process works; (3) explained the impact of a particular change to the process that is currently being considered; and (4) enumerated some potential modifications that might further improve the process.

“The merit review process used for review of federal grant applications for support of biological and biomedical research is indisputably the best system for managing this important responsibility,” Mr. Yamamoto testified. “Its primary features of peer-driven review and singular focus on merit have been critical in identifying grant applications that describe the best science by the best scientists.”

For complete witness testimony, visit: http://science.house.gov.
ENVIRONMENT: HOUSE EXAMINES IMPACT OF EPA REGULATIONS

The House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs, Stimulus Oversight and Government Spending held a hearing on Tuesday, July 26, 2011, titled "Lights Out: How Environmental Protection Agency Regulations Threaten Affordable Power and Job Creation." Witnesses included: Robert Perciasepe, Deputy Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency; Mike Carey, President, Ohio Coal Association; Janet Henry, Deputy General Counsel, American Electric Power; and Joel Schwartz, Professor of Environmental Epidemiology, Harvard School of Public Health.

Mr. Perciaspe defended EPA's regulations affecting the electric power industry. He said EPA’s recent and upcoming actions to control pollution from power plants will achieve major public health benefits for Americans that are significantly greater than the costs. These pollution-reducing rules are affordable and technologically achievable, he argued. “We do not have to choose between the significant public health benefits from reducing air pollution from power plants and a robust, reliable electric grid to power the U.S. economy,” Perciaspe said.

Mr. Carey testified on behalf of the Ohio Coal Association, and said new regulations on power plants are making it costly and impractical to burn coal to provide electricity. “It's all-out effort to stop the ability to access coal, and where they can't do that with a straight face, they will look to eliminate all of our customers,” he argued.

Ms. Henry explained the American Electric Power’s (AEP) analysis of the impacts of the new EPA regulations on electricity reliability, capital costs and electricity rate increases for customers. She also described the results from other studies that estimate related broader economic impacts, such as national and regional job losses, plant retirements and costs. She said that AEP’s major concerns with new EPA rules include: unrealistic compliance deadlines, multiple regulatory programs, abrupt power plant retirements, unanticipated electric grid reliability problems, high electricity rate increases, and a loss of jobs.

Mr. Schwartz argued that “there is clear, convincing evidence that this particulate air pollution is not merely a nuisance darkening our skies. It kills people.” He said the United States has the technology to reduce these rates. In particular, the technology to control particle-forming emissions from coal burning power plants has been commercially available since the 1970’s. Over half the power plants in the U.S. already use this technology, but other plants have delayed installing it for decades. Schwartz said, “The Clean Air Transport Rule addresses the emissions from those plants, and will save tens of thousands of lives per year,” he concluded.

For more information, visit: http://oversight.house.gov/.

IMMIGRATION: SENATE JUDICIARY EXAMINES NEED FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM

The Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and Border Security held a hearing on July 26, 2011 entitled: “The Economic Imperative for Enacting Immigration Reform.”

The Committee received testimony from a number of witnesses, including the Mayors of three U.S. cities, and Robert Greifeld, Chief Executive Officer, NASDAQ OMX Group, New York, New York; Brad Smith, General Counsel and Senior Vice President, Legal and Corporate Affairs, Microsoft Corporation; and Dr. Puneet S. Arora, Los Angeles, CA.

Laurent Gilbert, the Mayor of Lewiston, Maine, testified on behalf of a Partnership for a New American Economy, a group of some 300 mayors and business leaders from 40 states who believe in sensible immigration reform that will spur economic grown and create American jobs. The principles that the group espouses for immigration reform are:

- Secure U.S. borders and prevent illegal immigration through tougher enforcement and better use of technology;

- Develop a simple and secure system for employers to verify employment eligibility and
hold businesses that are not compliant, or abuse visa programs, accountable for their actions;
- Increase opportunities for immigrants to enter the United States workforce and for foreign students to stay in the United States to work;
- Create a streamlined process by which employers can get the seasonal and permanent employees they need, when Americans aren’t filling vacant jobs; and
- Establish a path to legal status for the undocumented currently living in the United States with requirements such as registering with the federal government, learning English, paying taxes and following all laws; and
- Strengthen federal, state, local, and employer-sponsored programs that offer English language, civics, and educational classes to immigrants.

In his testimony, Mr. Greifeld stressed that immigration reform should be seen as a “pressing jobs issue,” and he decried the loss of foreign-born, U.S.-educated college and graduate students who leave the United States after finishing their education, because they are not allowed or encouraged to remain here. “Reform must convey economic priorities about job growth and global competitiveness. Increasing H-1B numbers is no longer enough. We need to admit and keep entrepreneurs here so that the creative dynamism of our marketplace has the very best skills and minds.” Greifeld also called for de-linking legal immigration reform from illegal immigration reform, saying that “Americans are losing jobs and opportunity while we let one issue drag down the other.”

Dr. Arora testified on behalf of Immigration Voice, a national grassroots non-profit organization of over 60,000 active highly skilled immigrants, which advocates for the hundreds of thousand skilled immigrants and their families waiting for permanent U.S. residence. He discussed the problems with the current visa and green card system which in effect creates a permanent legal immigration workforce relying on restrictive temporary visas. He called for eliminating the per-country limit on green cards, which would eliminate having highly skilled immigrants from the largest countries bear the greatest burden, and instead distribute the wait times for green cards among all immigrants, regardless of country of birth. Dr. Arora also supported recapturing previously authorized but unused green card numbers and raising the employment-based green card cap to 290,000 visas per year. He also supported exempting certain categories of immigrants from the employment-based caps, such as those with advanced degrees from U.S. universities, and medical professionals serving underserved areas.

For the testimony of all the witnesses, go to: [http://judiciary.senate.gov](http://judiciary.senate.gov).

**ECONOMY: SENATE DISCUSSES MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES AND THE AMERICAN DREAM**

On Tuesday, July 26, 2011, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee held a hearing titled, "Building the Ladder of Opportunity: What’s Working to Make the American Dream a Reality for Middle Class Families.” Witnesses included: Hilda L. Solis, Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor; Tom Prinske, Owner, T. Castro Produce Co. (Chicago, Ill); Deborah King, Executive Director, 1199 Service Employees International Union Training and Employment Funds (New York, NY); and Sarah Corey, Public Relations Director, IceStone, (New York, NY).

Secretary Solis testified that the payroll employment numbers reported for May and June by the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed a slowing economic recovery – job growth of 25,000 and 18,000 in each of the two months respectively – this growth is nowhere near enough to keep up with regular population growth in the labor force, let alone bring the unemployment rate down to pre-recession levels, she said.

According to the Department of Labor, the weak labor market has been particularly tough on young workers. The 17.3 percent unemployment rate for 16- to 24- year old workers in June 2011 is nearly 6 percentage points higher than at the start of the recession in December 2007. While the unemployment rate has declined by nearly one percent in the last year, the rate is still high. Although young workers with a bachelor’s degree have more labor market opportunities, they too face an extremely difficult job market and
now confront substantial hurdles into the middle class, Secretary Solis stated. For example, the unemployment rate for young college graduates was 12.1 percent in June 2011, far worse than the 4.4 percent unemployment rate of older college-educated workers. Regarding unemployment insurance benefits, the Secretary said that 23 million unemployed workers received $150 billion in unemployment insurance benefits in 2010.

The key to recovery, Solis said, is the manufacturing sector. The manufacturing sector has shown enormous resiliency and strength in the economic recovery so far, she said, with over 250,000 jobs added since the beginning of 2010.

“Last month’s jobs report just underscores that more work needs to be done to stimulate new employment opportunities in the private sector and to support workers striving to achieve the skills needed in the new economy,” she concluded.

For more information, visit: http://help.senate.gov/.

**COMMERCE: HOUSE SMALL BUSINESS REVIEWS NATIONAL EXPORT STRATEGY**

On Wednesday, July 27, 2011, the House Small Business Committee held a hearing titled, "Bureaucratic Obstacles for Small Exporters: Is our National Export Strategy Working?" Witnesses included: Christian Foster, Deputy Administrator, Foreign Agriculture Service, Department of Agriculture; Marie Johns, Deputy Administrator, Small Business Administration; Suresh Kumar, Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General, U.S. Commercial Service, International Trade Administration; Mark Rice, President, Maritime Applied Physics Corp., Baltimore, Md.; Mitchell Goetze, President and Chief Operating Officer, Goetze's Candy Co. Inc., Baltimore, Md., representing National Confectioners Association; and Maurice Kogon, Director, Center for International Trade Development, El Camino College, Hawthorne, CA.

The Commerce Department recently released the 2011 National Export Strategy (NES) outlining the federal government’s strategy to improve the coordination and effectiveness of the federal trade agencies. There are more than 20 federal agencies that play a role in the export process, and many small businesses have a difficult time navigating the bureaucracy and regulations. This hearing provided an opportunity to learn more about the obstacles that deter many small businesses from exporting, and highlight ways to improve the process.

Maurice Kogon testified that the NES is “not yet as relevant or as helpful as it could be” to meet the needs of small businesses. He called for a “systematic collaboration with non-federal partners,” such as his Center. The vast network of state and local export assistance organizations, he said, could be part of an overarching export optimization strategy to both fertilize the tree and pick the low hanging fruit.

On behalf of the National Confectioners Association, Mr. Goetz testified that the United States needs to consider a careful balance of reduced domestic regulatory burdens, smarter supply management, increased marketing of government resources, and implementing policies that allow U.S. products to enter new markets. Mr. Rice testified that export financing, be it through the SBA or EXIM bank, is not well understood by small businesses that are new to exporting. He said the process often depends upon the actions and recommendations of bankers who also may not be experienced in exporting. Rice concluded, “More needs to be done to locally coordinate and promote the federal programs so that small businesses understand the remarkable guarantees that the U.S. Government offers for exporting.”

In 2010, U.S. exports accounted for nearly 12 percent of the GDP and supported an estimated 10 million jobs, including about four million small business jobs. “Passing the pending trade agreements and eliminating needless red tape would be an instant catalyst to spark growth in our economy and get Americans back on the job,” Chairman Sam Graves (MO) told the Committee.

For more information, visit: http://smallbusiness.house.gov/.
**EDUCATION: HOUSE EXAMINES TEACHER QUALITY INITIATIVES**

The House Education and the Workforce Committee held a hearing titled "Education Reforms: Exploring Teacher Quality Initiatives," on Wednesday, July 27, 2011. At the hearing, educators discussed the importance of attracting and maintaining quality teachers in the nation’s classrooms. Witnesses included: Kevin S. Huffman, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Education, Nashville, Tenn.; Tom Boasberg, Superintendent, Denver Public Schools, Denver, Colo.; Kate Walsh, President, National Council on Teacher Quality; and David Cicarella, President, New Haven Federation of Teachers, New Haven, Conn.

At the hearing, Chairman John Kline (MN) expressed concerns about teacher quality policies under current law. He said valuing credentials and tenure over student outcomes is completely unacceptable. Every student deserves to be inspired and challenged by an outstanding educator, not one who has lost interest in helping students succeed and is protected by rigid teacher tenure rules, he said. “As we work to reform the nation’s education system, the committee will support state and local efforts to recruit and maintain more effective teachers in the nation’s classrooms,” Kline said.

National Council on Teacher Quality president Kate Walsh said that no education improvement strategy that states and districts take on is likely to have a greater impact than one which seeks to maximize teacher performance. She said improving teacher quality must be the centerpiece of any serious school reform effort. She also said the policy context set by Congress and states is of central importance to ensuring that students are exposed to the most well-trained, knowledgeable, and effective teachers possible.

Tennessee Commissioner of Education Kevin Huffman discussed a new statewide teacher evaluation system scheduled to go into effect in the upcoming school year. Mr. Huffman also explained Tennessee’s efforts to improve teacher tenure practices. He said teachers were previously granted tenure after three years, and virtually every teacher got it. Moving forward, he said teachers are eligible for tenure after a minimum of five years and only if they score a four or a five on the evaluation for their most recent two years of teaching. Additionally, teachers who gain tenure under the new system will lose their tenure if they are rated a one or a two for two consecutive years.

For more information, visit: [http://edworkforce.house.gov/](http://edworkforce.house.gov/).

**AGRICULTURE: SENATE ADDRESSES SPECIALTY AND ORGANIC CROPS**

On Thursday, July 28, 2011, the Senate Agriculture Committee held a hearing on “Opportunities for Specialty Crops and Organics in the Farm Bill.” Witnesses included: Ms. Ann Wright, Deputy Under Secretary, Marketing and Regulatory Programs, USDA; Dr. Catherine Woteki, Under Secretary, Research, Education, and Economics, USDA; Mr. Paul Bencal, Owner, Paul Bencal Farm, Ransomville, NY; and Mr. Robert Woolley, Owner, Dave Wilson Nursery, Hickman, CA.

Undersecretary Wright discussed the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). AMS administers two grant programs that were reauthorized and amended in the 2008 Farm Bill, one of which, the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, provides funding to States and U.S. territories to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Ms. Wright also testified on the importance of organic products. According to industry statistics, she said, U.S. sales of organic food and beverages have grown from $1 billion in 1990 to an estimated $26.7 billion in 2010. The organic industry is viewed as the fastest growing sector of agriculture, representing approximately 4 percent of overall food sales in 2010. Organic food sales grew 7.7 percent in 2010. Specialty crops have always been the leading category of organic sales, Wright said, and currently account for approximately 40 percent of U.S. organic retail. While the organic market overall is around 4 percent of all U.S. retail food sales, organic fruits and vegetables are reported to be 11% of the total U.S. retail produce sales.

Dr. Wotecki discussed, among other things, the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI). SCRI a total of $230 million over five years from 2008 to 2012 dedicated to help develop and disseminate
science-based tools and technology to address the critical needs of the specialty crops industry. For instance, she reported, SCRI has funded projects to reduce the amount of water needed to profitably and sustainably raise crops. One project in California, Dr. Wotecki said, has the potential to reduce water use in grape production by 153 billion to 307 billion gallons per year – enough water to meet the daily household water needs of over 6 million Americans for an entire year.

Mr. Bencal testified in support of the Market Access Program, explaining how it helped Welch’s grape juice expand into the Japanese market. According to USDA, between 1985, when MAP was created, and 2008, agriculture exports increased by 300 percent. The program has been funded annually since FY 2006 at $200 million, including in the 2008 Farm Bill. Mr. Bencal requested that MAP funds be maintained at least at current funding levels in the next farm bill and that branded cooperatives continue to be eligible for MAP funds.

Mr. Woolley testified on the importance of continuing programs to combat plant pests and diseases. Continued funding for USDA programs to identify and eradicate pests and diseases is essential in the Farm Bill reauthorization, he stressed.

For the testimony of all the witnesses, go to: http://agriculture.senate.gov.