

American Bakers Association

NEWS

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ABA Applauds Senate Committee for Hearing on National Uniformity *ABA Counsel Testifies, Making Strong Push for Passage*

(Washington, DC) - Yesterday the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a hearing to address the “National Uniformity for Food Act” (S. 3128). National Uniformity is an important issue to the baking industry and the American Bakers Association (ABA) and its members have been active over the last several weeks asking Members of the U.S. Senate to support or co-sponsor this legislation.

“ABA applauds the Committee for holding today’s important hearing. We are extremely grateful to Senator Burr for his leadership on this issue. This bill would create a uniform national system that would improve consumer confidence and eliminate the patchwork of State labeling laws that now exists,” said Robb MacKie, ABA President & CEO.

Senator Richard Burr (R-NC), lead sponsor of S. 3128, chaired the hearing and said, “If a food is safe to be sold in one state or 20 states, it should be safe in all states.” Throughout the hearing Senator Burr sought to clarify the “misinformation” that has been circulated regarding this bill. He defined uniformity as commonsense legislation that would not pre-empt states rights and implored opponents of the bill to “go back and read the legislation”. Senator Burr concluded that the hearing was a “great contribution to the debate.”

In cases where a state's law differs from the federal standard, it may petition the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to keep the existing state law in place or consider adopting the state law as a national standard. Until that petition is heard by the FDA the State law would remain in place.

“The National Uniformity for Food Act provides for one national, uniform standard for food safety and warning requirements,” said Lee Sanders, ABA Senior Vice President, Government & Public Affairs. “If enacted this legislation would eliminate confusion and would bolster consumer confidence because the information would be consistent from state to state and formulated by the FDA, the world’s leading food safety agency,” she concluded.

Two separate panels testified during the hearing. The first panel consisted of Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Diane Feinstein (D-CA), and Saxby Chambliss (R-GA). The second panel consisted of Bill Stadlander, a small businessman from Ohio; Peter Hutt, former General Counsel at FDA and ABA Counsel on FDA related matters; Elsa Murano, Former

Undersecretary for Food Safety at USDA and current Dean of the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences at Texas A&M University; and Bill Hubbard, former Associate Commissioner at FDA.

For more information on National Uniformity please contact Lee Sanders or Mike Florio at (202) 789-0300 or visit www.americanbakers.org or www.uniformityforfood.org/default.htm.

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