

NTEU

The National Treasury Employees Union

February 12, 2007

The Honorable John Dingell
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bart Stupak
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Dingell and Stupak:

NTEU is proud to represent the skilled professionals working at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) laboratories across the nation. These FDA employees conduct research and product analysis along with many other duties critical to the safety of food, drugs, and medical devices. In November, NTEU received an informational briefing by the FDA's Office of Regulatory Affairs (ORA) on its plans to restructure ORA including the consolidation of the 13 laboratories in ORA. While the agency did not share specifics on which laboratories would be closed, ORA officials said that there will be between four and six laboratories after the consolidation.

NTEU believes this proposal is seriously misguided and asks that it be halted. This is similar to an effort a decade ago by FDA to cut back its laboratories. The then-named General Accounting Office (GAO) issued a report highly critical of the agency plan, noting that FDA had offered no proof that large laboratories are more efficient than medium-sized facilities. In fact, back then GAO further said that FDA officials in both headquarters and the field could not provide any explanation to contradict data showing that six out of seven medium-sized laboratories were timelier in their handling of the work than were the agency's two largest labs.

Your committee has an important role in protecting the safety of the nation's food supply and of drugs and medical devices being marketed. I believe this proposal would compromise those efforts. I would ask that the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations conduct an investigation of this matter and see that the FDA is not allowed to

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close any labs until the public benefit can be proven. I note that tomorrow the subcommittee is scheduled to hold a hearing on FDA efforts to assure the safety of the drug supply. I would ask that the issue of lab closure and consolidation be raised at that hearing.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colleen M. Kelley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Colleen M. Kelley
National President

cc: Hon. Joe Barton, Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hon. Ed Whitfield, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations