

State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

Senator Robert Mayer - Serving Butler, Dunklin, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Ripley, Stoddard & Wayne Counties



[Website](#) | [Contact Me](#) | [Biography](#) | [Newsroom](#)

Food Safety Feature of State Summit

JEFFERSON CITY — I am following the results of a state conference on food safety held in Jefferson City earlier this month to discuss and make recommendations for maintaining and improving food safety for Missouri citizens.

The two-day summit, hosted by the governor, is one of many occurring across the country featuring discussions on a variety of food safety topics, ranging from harvest, to transportation, to processing, to storage to retail handling — essentially everything that happens before food reaches the consumer. As you can imagine, there are a number of factors involved in each of these processes aimed at preventing the contamination of food.

Missouri's food safety summit appears to be part of a nationwide effort to re-examine the nation's food safety system. Those participating included representatives from the state's Department of Health, Department of Agriculture, Milk Board, Meat Inspection Program, county health departments, food processors, restaurant associations and consumer groups. Representatives from the Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service also participated in the conference. The conference also featured a guest speaker from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta who gave a presentation on bioterrorism — another critical component of food safety.

In March, the president established a Food Safety Working Group consisting of officials from federal agencies that is charged with enhancing our food safety system to meet the challenges of a global food supply and fostering coordination through federal, state and local governments, which includes enhancing food safety laws. The group is recommending a new public-health focused approach to food safety based on: (1) prioritizing prevention; (2) strengthening surveillance and enforcement; and (3) improving response and recovery.

The Working Group recently announced specific steps it is taking to advance its core principles:

- Health and Human Services and the United States Department of Agriculture are targeting salmonella contamination by developing tougher standards to protect the safety of eggs, poultry, and turkey.
- To fight the threat of E. coli, USDA is stepping up enforcement in beef facilities and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is developing new industry guidance improving protections for leafy greens, melons, and tomatoes.
- The federal government is building a new national traceback and response system including clearer industry guidance, a new unified incident command system, and

improved use of technology to deliver individual food safety alerts to consumers.

- Also, the administration has announced a plan to strengthen the organization of federal food safety functions, including the creation of new positions at key food safety agencies and a continuing oversight role for the Food Safety Working Group.

The American food safety system is among the best in the world, but outbreaks of food-borne illness still threaten our nation's health. In recent years, we've seen a series of large recalls of batches of hamburger, spinach, peanut products, pistachios, peppers, mushrooms and alfalfa sprouts — and even cookie dough has been associated with serious disease. It was stated at the conference that based on estimates, 1 in 4 people get sick each year due to a food-borne illness.

While the agenda of the President's Working Group has not been fully defined, I urge you to stay tuned on this issue.

As always, if you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at 1-877-291-5584.

###

	Capitol Office	Website:	Phone Number:	
	State Capitol Building	http://www.senate.mo.gov/mayer	877.291-5584	
	Room 422		Fax:	
	Jefferson City, MO 65101		573.526.1384	