

**TRANSCRIPT****FRONTLINE: The Trouble with Chicken****Deadly Bacteria and Food Safety****Video 2 - Labeling Salmonella**

**NARRATOR:** Last year, with more severe strains of salmonella emerging, Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro questioned Secretary Vilsack about the problem.

**Rep. ROSA DeLAURO (D), Connecticut:** Why does USDA refuse to consider multiple-resistant salmonella as an adulterant, the same way we do as E. Coli 1057:H7?

**TOM VILSACK, Secretary of Agriculture:** We attempted to do what you are asking us to do relative to salmonella and adulterants, and we were basically told by the court that we did not have the authority or the jurisdiction to do that.

**Rep. ROSA DeLAURO:** I asked Secretary Vilsack in a hearing— when he said they didn't they didn't have the authority in the hearing, I looked directly at him and I said, "Well, ask for the authority."

Ask us for the authority.

**TOM VILSACK:** Well, we've attempted to exercise the authority and courts have basically told us, "Can't do it."

**Rep. ROSA DeLAURO:** Ask us for the authority!

**TOM VILSACK:** Well—

**Re. ROSA DeLAURO:** I'm serious.

**TOM VILSACK:** Well, I didn't realize—

**Rep. ROSA DeLAURO:** We have legislation here we can deal with these issues. Ask for the authority. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

**DAVID E. HOFFMAN, Correspondent:** Did the Obama administration ask for more authority?

**Rep. ROSA DeLAURO:** No.

**DAVID E. HOFFMAN:** Why not?

**Rep. ROSA DeLAURO:** I still I believe that there's a question of the— of the industry. It's a very powerful industry, and I believe they have a very strong lobbying effort that the USDA is not willing to buck.

**NARRATOR:** But the administration points the blame at Congress, which over the years has been unwilling to give USDA more authority.

**TOM VILSACK:** If Congress wants to give us additional power and direction, fair enough. But at this point in time, I have to live with the rules that we have.

**DAVID E. HOFFMAN:** Have you asked for more authority?

**TOM VILSACK:** Well, right now, our focus has been primarily on making sure that our regulatory systems are what they need to be.

**NARRATOR:** Recently, USDA began requiring companies to recognize salmonella as a likely hazard and proposed salmonella standards on chicken parts. But that doesn't give USDA any more legal authority.

**CAROLINE SMITH DeWAAL, Center for Science in the Public Interest:** That means if a company is producing chicken with salmonella rates much higher than what's allowed under these performance standards, they can continue to operate and they can continue to sell that chicken.

**NARRATOR:** We wanted to speak to the National Chicken Council, the industry's main lobbying group, but they declined repeated requests for an interview.

The group, and many companies, have long opposed tighter regulations and efforts to ban any types of salmonella as adulterants.

**MIKE ROBACH, V.P., Cargill:** Well, I don't believe that salmonella rises to the level of an adulterant. I don't believe that the mere presence of salmonella, you know, causes a food safety hazard the way the presence of E. Coli 0157 does.

**DAVID E. HOFFMAN:** Even these more dangerous types of salmonella?

**MIKE ROBACH:** Even the ones that are more prevalently found in human illness. I don't believe that they rise to that level.

**BILL MARLER, Food Safety Attorney:** Let's make no mistake about what's going on here. It is the failure of FSIS [*define in supports*] to think about themselves as a public health entity. They choose not to go to Congress and ask for authority, for recall authority. And they choose not to do the basic scientific work that they need to justify calling salmonella an adulterant so they can withstand a court challenge from the industry. That's the failure here.