



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

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For Immediate Release

Monday, September 26, 2005

Grassley Seeks Permanent FDA Commissioner

Senator says nominee should be able to focus 100 percent on FDA

WASHINGTON — Sen. Chuck Grassley is urging the Bush administration to act quickly to name a new, permanent Commissioner for the Food and Drug Administration who can dedicate 100 percent of his or her time and talent to the nation's public health and safety agency.

Grassley made his appeal in a letter sent today to White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card. During the last two years, Grassley has conducted oversight of the FDA and sought to make the agency more forthcoming in providing information to the public and transparent in its operations. He has introduced legislation to mandate a clinical trial registry and to improve post-market review of prescription medicines.

The text of Grassley's letter to Card follows here.

September 26, 2005

Mr. Andrew H. Card Jr.
Chief of Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Card:

I'm writing to express a strong view that the nominee the President selects to serve as Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) demonstrate a clear understanding of the importance of this position, and a willingness to dedicate 100 percent of his or her talents and energy to the FDA.

I'm sending this message based on the indications that the individual selected to serve as Acting Commissioner until a permanent Commissioner is selected will continue with his duties and responsibilities as Director of the National Cancer Institute (NCI) at the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Andrew von Eschenbach has said that he believes he can bring a "full commitment" to the leadership of both the FDA and NCI. I expect that whoever is named Commissioner – either acting or confirmed – will know that it's not possible to give the FDA the kind of strong new leadership that is needed to reinvigorate the agency on a part-time basis.

The FDA's mission is to promote and protect the public health. The activities of the FDA, which are too numerous to list here, help provide a broad safety net to maintain public confidence in all FDA-regulated products. As one former Commissioner has said:

While many people think of FDA as the agency that reviews and approves medical products, this is only part of FDA's mandate. FDA oversees an immense range of products, including food, cosmetics, veterinary drugs and feeds, vaccines, the nation's blood supply, drugs and medical devices from the very simple to the most complex. In fact, 25 percent of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product is under the purview of the FDA.

I look forward to a new Commissioner, who can be totally dedicated to the job, being named as soon as possible. The FDA has struggled with temporary leadership for too many years.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley
Chairman