



News Release

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FOOD SAFETY TASK FORCE VISITS N.G.A. MEMBERS - ASSOCIATED GROCERS DISTRIBUTION WAREHOUSE AND MATHERNE'S ASSOCIATED SUPER MARKET IN BATON ROUGE

ARLINGTON, VA — The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Michael Leavitt and his Blue Ribbon task force on food safety visited the distribution center for Associated Grocers of Baton Rouge and Matherne's Supermarket Wednesday August, 1.

The National Grocers Association (N.G.A.) in collaboration with Associated Grocers coordinated this meeting as a part of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) across-the-board review of food safety with a focus on imported products. On July 18, 2007 President Bush asked Secretary Leavitt to chair a working group focused on promoting the safety of imported products.

HHS Secretary Michael Leavitt and his group met with Associated Grocers *J.H. Campbell*, President and CEO, *John Gillespie*, Senior Vice President, Distribution, *Randy Fletcher*, Vice President, Logistics and *Mike Vove*, Vice President, Perishable Procurement at Associate Grocers of Baton Rouge Distribution Warehouse. The group toured the warehouse facility visiting the General Grocery Warehouse, Dairy Warehouse, Produce Warehouse, and the Meat Warehouse.

The group then visited a local independent retailer and N.G.A. member *Matherne's Associated Super Market*. The task force had the opportunity to walk through the store, stop and talk to department managers and customers. On hand to meet with Secretary Leavitt was *Ernie Matherne*, Owner and *Tim Stevens*, Store Manager.

"Recent events have understandably focused Americans on the issue of safety of our food. Continually improving our import safeguards to meet the changing demands of a global economy is of the utmost importance" said Tom Zaucha, President and CEO, the National Grocers Association. "N.G.A. members welcome the opportunity to be involved in and play a leadership role to improve consumer confidence in our food supply. We look forward to working with Secretary Leavitt and his team to assure the safety, quality and effectiveness of imported products to this country."

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N.G.A. is the national trade association representing the retail and wholesale grocers that comprise the independent sector of the food distribution industry. An independent retailer is a privately owned or controlled food retail company operating a variety of formats. Most independent operators are serviced by wholesale distributors, while others may be partially or fully self-distributing. Some are publicly traded but with controlling shares held by the family and others are employee owned. Independents are the true “entrepreneurs” of the grocery industry and dedicated to their customers, associates, and communities. N.G.A. members include retail and wholesale grocers, state grocers associations, as well as manufacturers and service suppliers. For more information about N.G.A. and the independent sector of the industry, see the N.G.A. website: www.NationalGrocers.org.