

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, March 16, 2005

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As Baseball Defends Drug Policy, Senate Panel Decides Who Determines America's Real Drug Safety Policies

Consumer groups urge tough questioning Thursday of FDA nominee on agency's failure to take timely action on drug safety

(Washington, D.C.) – Consumer groups are asking the Senate Health committee Thursday to get specific answers from Lester Crawford, the nominee to head the Food and Drug Administration, on his plans to improve drug safety and eliminate conflict of interests in the agency that has kept it from acting quickly to protect public safety, especially in the case of the painkiller Vioxx.

In a letter sent to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, Consumers Union, Consumer Federation of America and U.S. Public Interest Research Group asked the panel to compel Crawford to outline his specific plans to achieve “meaningful drug safety reform.” The groups also want Crawford to explain the agency’s drug safety record during the past three years, when Crawford served as either deputy or acting FDA commissioner.

“During that time, the agency’s high profile missteps and failure to take timely action to protect consumers from unreasonable drug safety risks have raised serious questions about his leadership, his ability to manage interagency conflicts, and willingness to act in the best interest of consumers.”

“Though he claims to have a bold vision for the FDA, the question is whether or not Dr. Crawford is committed to achieving substantive, rather than symbolic reform,” the letter continued.

“Such reforms must include full public disclosure of all clinical trial results, greater independence for the Office of Drug Safety, stronger authority to require additional studies on the safety of approved drugs, and increased capacity to take action to mitigate unreasonable risks when they arise.”

The groups are urging the Senate HELP committee to delay action on Crawford’s nomination until he lays out the steps he will take to change the agency’s culture and achieve meaningful reforms.

To read the full letter, go to www.consumersunion.org.

