

COLLEGE PARK, MD – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) today spoke to members of the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) who are employed at the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Center for Food Safety & Applied Nutrition about issues of concern to federal workers.

"Quite frankly, these are not the friendliest of times for federal employees," Hoyer said. "Despite this environment, you continue to do an outstanding job promoting and protecting the public's health by ensuring that the nation's food supply and cosmetics are safe and properly labeled."

Hoyer decried the Bush administration's proposal to gut the civil service program and replace it with a so-called "pay-for-performance" system. "Their plan would significantly limit employee rights and protections across the government, including the fundamental right to collective bargaining."

Hoyer said he will continue to fight to roll back the misguided A-76 competitive outsourcing initiatives. "We all believe competition can be a good thing but it can only work when federal employees and private contractors are placed on the same level playing field."

Hoyer has led the charge to ensure federal civilian employees and military personnel receive an annual pay adjustment that, at minimum, keeps the public sector competitive with the private sector. "President Bush's proposed 2.1% increase was an insult to hard working federal employees and I am optimistic that Congress will enact at least a 2.7% raise this year."

Finally, Hoyer addressed what he calls "the deeply disturbing intrusion of politics into the FDA's scientific and regulatory work." "When the FDA says something is safe to ingest, or concludes that it is in the public interest to approve a certain drug, the American people assume the agency is basing its conclusions on the soundest scientific principles," he said.

Hoyer cited a Republican political appointee's decision to overturn an FDA Advisory Committee's vote allowing over-the-counter sales of the emergency contraceptive known as "Plan B." "The moment the FDA is viewed as being an extension of whichever administration happens to be in power, one hundred years of serving the public interest with excellence and integrity will be squandered," Hoyer concluded.

###