

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on Thursday announced that the Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability (ACBSA) will hold a meeting on June 10 and 11 to review the Food and Drug Administration's ban on blood donation by gay men.

The meeting is in response to language included by Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel) in fiscal year 2009 House Appropriations legislation that called for workshops and additional communication between federal agencies, blood collection organizations and the public.

"We've seen great advances on keeping our blood supply safe over the past 20 years, but our policies haven't kept up," Rep. Farr said. "The FDA's continued refusal to apply current science to its policies is discriminatory and places unnecessary strain on our blood supply. I'm pleased to see that we're at least making some progress to overturn the ban."

At the June meeting, the ACBSA will hear presentations and engage in deliberations on the current FDA policy. Members will be asked to discuss factors to consider regarding a possible policy change, whether current scientific information would support a policy change, studies necessary to implement a change, and whether additional safety measures would be needed to assure blood safety if the ban is lifted.

Current FDA policy bans men who have had sex with another man at any time since 1977 from donating blood. This ban has been in place since 1985. The ACBSA, created in 1997, is tasked with advising the Secretary of Health and Human Services on a range of issues including the safety and availability of blood and blood products and the ethical and legal issues related to transfusion and transplantation safety.

Farr's report language in the FY2009 Agriculture Appropriations bill:

- "Blood. -- The Committee encourages FDA to conduct workshops and engage in other forms of communication with federal agencies, organizations involved in blood collection and others, to ensure that those organizations and the public understand the latest scientific information available on blood safety issues."

Members of the public will be able to offer comment on the second day of the meeting. Further details of this meeting are available in the Federal Register online [here](#) .

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