

Sanders, Murkowski vow to block appointment of FDA commissioner over GMO salmon, drug prices

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A crucial Senate committee on Tuesday voted unanimously to approve Dr. Robert M. Califf, a cardiologist and clinical trial expert from Duke University, as the commissioner of the [Food and Drug Administration](#). Final approval by the full Senate, however, is unlikely to happen soon, because Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska has pledged to block his candidacy over the agency's controversial approval of genetically engineered salmon.

Ms. Murkowski, a Republican, said she would put a hold on Dr. Califf's candidacy because the F.D.A. approved a [genetically engineered salmon](#) as fit for consumption just days after she questioned him on the topic [at his confirmation hearing in November](#). The senator, whose state is a major salmon producer, [had long opposed the genetically engineered fish](#). . .

Dr. Califf has been a [consultant to drug companies](#) and ran a research institute that received a majority of its funding from the industry, and his candidacy was met with skepticism by public health groups and some Democrats, who said those ties raised concerns that he was too close to the industry he was being called on to regulate.

Many medical experts dispute that, saying that the drug industry is a principal funder of research in the United States and that working with companies does not present an inherent conflict.

There are other potential blocks. A spokesman for Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, a Democratic presidential candidate, said Tuesday that Mr. Sanders was also considering putting a hold on Dr. Califf's candidacy, saying he had not done enough to stop the rise in drug prices.

Read full, original post: [Candidate to Run F.D.A. Is Approved, but Likely to Be Blocked](#)