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DOLE, JEPSEN TRY TO HEAD-OFF DEEPER CUTS IN NUTRITION PROGRAMS

WASHINGTON--In a letter to Agriculture Secretary John Block, Republican Senators Robert Dole and Roger Jepsen today expressed their concerns about recent news reports of proposed FY 1984 cutbacks for the food stamp and child nutrition programs.

"We hope news reports that the Administration is allegedly considering sharp reductions in benefits to people 60-64 years old are inaccurate," said Dole. "We would also hope that attempts to eliminate the participation of residential children's institutions, such as orphanages, homes for the mentally retarded and handicapped, in the Child Care Food Program are also untrue."

"If such budget options have been under active consideration by the Department of Agriculture in preparing its budget recommendations for FY 1984, what seems to be proposed here would result in minimal savings and create undue hardship on vulnerable individuals in genuine need," Dole said. "I believe such plans would be unacceptable to the Congress."

"Although these proposals might have been listed as part of a wide range of options for preliminary consideration by USDA officials, it is by no means certain that they will emerge as part of the President's final FY 1984 budget recommendations," said Dole. "What we should do now, as a precautionary measure, is send a strong signal to the Administration that such a course of further deep cuts in the nutrition area should be redirected into other areas of the budget."

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

October 7, 1982

Honorable John R. Block
Secretary
Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Jack:

We are concerned about news reports indicating the Administration is considering further budget reductions in the nutrition programs which would have a serious impact on the elderly, orphans, handicapped and retarded children, etc. Given the vulnerable nature of these population groups, it would be unwise, in my view, for the Administration to pursue such a fiscal year 1984 budget course.

If the Administration is seriously considering the following budget options, we think it timely to register our concerns:

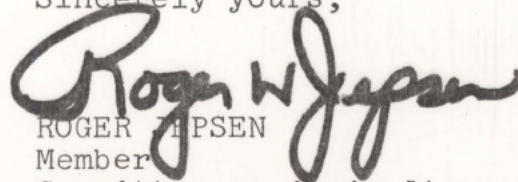
- (1) Reducing food stamp benefits for households with members age 60-64. According to FNS, there are over 400,000 recipients aged 60-64, and these households would suffer an average benefit reduction of 31%.
- (2) Reducing food stamp cost-of-living adjustments by 3% below actual increases in the USDA's Thrifty Food Plan (or about half). This would seriously undermine the purchasing power of food stamp recipients across-the-board, including the elderly and disabled.
- (3) Raising the price of reduced-price lunches in the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, would impact the near-poor, who heavily absorbed the previous budget cuts.
- (4) Terminating participation of residential children's institutions such as orphanages, homes for mentally retarded and handicapped children, in the Child Care Food Program.
- (5) Terminating the Summer Feeding Program, which has already been cut in half, and is now restricted to poor areas (usually inner city) and must be run by schools or public institutions.

We would hope that these reports are inaccurate, because these types of proposals are inequitable in their impact. At this stage of the process of developing budget recommendations for FY 1984, we would strongly advise that the Administration not endorse proposals that would only yield minimal savings and would seriously impact on very vulnerable low-income people.

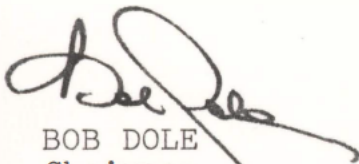
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We have a responsibility to achieve further spending reductions in the Federal budget, and we should continue to monitor the nutrition programs to make certain that benefits are being targetted effectively. However, food programs comprise only 2% of the Federal budget, yet nearly 10% of all budget reductions in FY 1982 came from the food programs and further cuts were enacted this year for FY 1983 and beyond. We suggest that the Administration pursue other directions in their search for FY 1984 budget reductions.

Sincerely yours,



ROGER JEPSEN
Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
and Forestry



BOB DOLE
Chairman
Nutrition Subcommittee