

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.

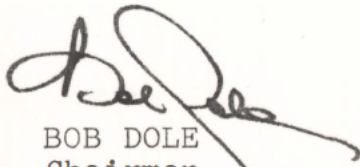
If the Administration is seriously considering the following budget options, we think it timely to register our concerns:

- (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.

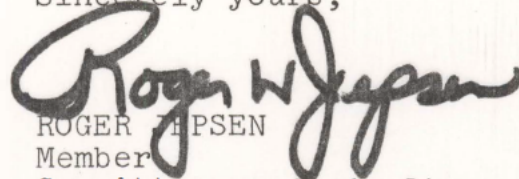
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We have a responsibility to achieve further spending reductions in the Federal budget, and we should continue to monitor the nutrition programs to make certain that benefits are being targetted effectively. However, food programs comprise only 2% of 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.



BOB DOLE
Chairman
Nutrition Subcommittee

Sincerely yours,



ROGER JEPSEN
Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
and Forestry