

News from Senator

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STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION HEARING

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TODAY WE WILL BE HEARING TESTIMONY FROM VARIOUS EXPERTS IN THE FIELD OF CHILD NUTRITION. I WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME THEM AND EXPRESS MY APPRECIATION TO THEM FOR TAKING TIME FROM THEIR BUSY SCHEDULES TO BE HERE WITH US TODAY.

REAUTHORIZATION PROCESS

EVERY FOUR YEARS, WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO EVALUATE THE CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS IN THEIR ENTIRETY, EVEN THOUGH WE ARE TECHNICALLY ENGAGED IN THE PROCESS OF REAUTHORIZING ONLY THE NON-ENTITLEMENT PROGRAMS, WHICH ARE WIC, THE SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM, NUTRITION EDUCATION AND TRAINING, STATE ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES, AND THE AUTHORITY FOR SECTION 32 COMMODITIES.

WE MADE A LOT OF PROGRAM CHANGES IN THE SCHOOL LUNCH, SCHOOL BREAKFAST, CHILD CARE AND THE SUMMER FOOD PROGRAMS BACK DURING THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS OF 1981, JUST A YEAR AFTER THE PROGRAMS WERE REAUTHORIZED THE LAST TIME. AFTER A PERIOD OF PROGRAM STABILITY, WE CAN NOW LOOK BACK TO SEE HOW THESE CHANGES HAVE AFFECTED THE PROGRAMS IN QUESTION. I AM AWARE OF TWO BILLS CURRENTLY PENDING BEFORE THE CONGRESS AND THIS COMMITTEE -- S. 1913, THE HUDDLESTON-COCHRAN BILL, AND ITS COUNTERPART, H.R. 4091. ALTHOUGH I DISAGREE WITH THE WAY IN WHICH BENEFITS ARE TARGETTED UNDER BOTH OF THESE BILLS, I THINK THEY SHOULD RECEIVE A FAIR HEARING. WE ARE NOW AT A TIME IN OUR NATION'S HISTORY WHEN WE MUST BE CERTAIN THAT NUTRITION PROGRAM FUNDS ARE BEING TARGETTED EFFECTIVELY TO LOW-INCOME CHILDREN. AS THE CBO EVALUATIONS REVEAL, BOTH OF THESE LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES WOULD DIRECT OVER 70 PERCENT OF THEIR BENEFITS TO CHILDREN FROM FAMILIES ABOVE 130 PERCENT OF POVERTY, WHICH DEFINES LOW-INCOME ELIGIBILITY FOR BOTH THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM AND THE SCHOOL LUNCH AND BREAKFAST PROGRAMS.

DOLE SUPPORT OF CHILD NUTRITION

AS EVERYONE HERE KNOWS, I HAVE LONG BEEN A STRONG SUPPORTER OF CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS. NOTHING HAS CHANGED MY COMMITMENT TO THESE PROGRAMS OR MY BELIEF THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD MAINTAIN ITS LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE NUTRITION PROGRAM AREA. HOWEVER, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN'T BE EXPECTED TO DO EVERYTHING.

IN RECENT YEARS, I HAVE BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT A TENDENCY FOR PEOPLE TO CONSIDER THESE PROGRAMS IN TERMS OF FEDERAL SPENDING INSTEAD OF THE CHILDREN SERVED. I WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS THIS CONCERN.

IN 1970, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WAS SPENDING JUST OVER \$700 MILLION ON ALL CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS. BY 1980, THIS AMOUNT HAD GROWN TO APPROXIMATELY \$4.4 BILLION, AND WOULD HAVE EXCEEDED \$5 BILLION BY FY82 HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR RECONCILIATION.

...MORE

BASED STRICTLY ON BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS, SOME MIGHT SAY, AND HAVE SAID, THAT THIS OVER 500% INCREASE IN FEDERAL CHILD NUTRITION FUNDING IS NOT JUSTIFIED. OTHERS, WHOSE CONSIDERATIONS ARE LIMITED TO PROGRAM OPERATIONS AND ACTIVITIES, HAVE SAID THAT THE \$1.3 BILLION THAT CONGRESS CUT FROM THE 1982 CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM IS EQUALLY UNJUSTIFIABLE. I WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS BOTH OF THESE CONTENTIONS, BECAUSE I THINK THEY ARE EQUALLY FALSE. THEY ARE FALSE BECAUSE THEY OVERLOOK THE IMPORTANT ISSUE OF HOW CHANGED FUNDING HAS AFFECTED THE CHILDREN SERVED.

LOW-INCOME TARGETTING

FOR THOSE WHO LIMIT THEIR CONCERNS TO BUDGET NUMBERS, I WOULD POINT OUT THAT IN 1970 VERY LITTLE OF CHILD NUTRITION EXPENDITURES (ABOUT 20%) WERE DIRECTED TOWARD LOW-INCOME CHILDREN. ONLY 4.6 MILLION OUT OF THE 22.4 MILLION CHILDREN IN THE SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM WERE RECEIVING FREE OR REDUCED PRICE MEALS.

ADDITIONALLY, THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM, WHICH WAS BETTER TARGETTED TO LOW INCOME CHILDREN, HAD JUST BEGUN, AND SERVED ONLY 450,000 CHILDREN. FINALLY, THE WIC PROGRAM, WHICH MANY REGARD AS THE BEST NEED-BASED OF ALL CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS, HAD NOT YET BEEN CREATED. IN CONTRAST, BY 1980, FEDERAL EXPENDITURES FOR CHILDREN IN LOW-INCOME FAMILIES REPRESENTED 60% OF ALL FEDERAL CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM EXPENDITURES. THE SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM SERVED A TOTAL OF 26.6 MILLION CHILDREN IN 1980, OR 4.2 MILLION MORE CHILDREN THAN IN 1970. HOWEVER, ALL OF THIS GROWTH AND MORE WAS IN THE FREE AND REDUCED PRICE PROGRAMS, WHICH INCREASED BY 7.3 MILLION CHILDREN (TO 11.9 MILLION), WHILE PARTICIPATION IN THE REGULAR, NON-INCOME TESTED PORTION OF THE PROGRAM DROPPED FROM 17.8 MILLION TO 14.7 MILLION, FOR THE BREAKFAST PROGRAM, PARTICIPATION GREW FROM A TOTAL OF 450,000 IN 1970 TO 3.6 MILLION IN 1980. AND 85% OF THESE CHILDREN WERE FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES.

FINALLY, THE WIC PROGRAM, WHICH HAD NOT EXISTED IN 1970, WAS SERVING AN AVERAGE OF NEARLY 2 MILLION WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN IN 1980, AND FUNDING FOR THIS PROGRAM ALONE REPRESENTED 16% OF ALL CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM EXPENDITURES.

I RECITE THESE STATISTICS FOR THOSE WHOSE PRIMARY INTEREST IS IN DOLLAR FIGURES BECAUSE I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THEM TO UNDERSTAND THE HUMAN CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD NUTRITION EXPENDITURE GROWTH. THE DOLLAR GROWTH IN FUNDING FOR THESE PROGRAMS, WHEN VIEWED FROM THE CONTEXT OF PARTICIPATION IS NOT AS HAPHAZARD AS A GRAPH ONLY SHOWING DOLLARS MIGHT SUGGEST. YES, FUNDING GREW CONSIDERABLY BETWEEN 1970 AND 1980, BUT WITH IT CAME A COMMITMENT TO THE NEEDS OF LOW-INCOME CHILDREN, A COMMITMENT WHICH COSTS MORE THAN JUST PROVIDING A MINIMAL SUBSIDY AND LETTING CHILDREN PAY THE DIFFERENCE, OR GO HUNGRY. IN THE LATE SIXTIES AND EARLY SEVENTIES, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EMBARKED ON A NON-PARTISAN EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE NUTRITION OF OUR CHILDREN, PARTICULARLY OUR NEEDY CHILDREN. AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THIS COMMITMENT WE HAVE PROVIDED THE BEST NUTRITION PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN THAT THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN. NOT PERFECT PERHAPS, BUT UNEQUIVOCALLY THE BEST. EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, OUR SPECIAL CONCERN FOR NEEDY CHILDREN IS CLEARLY REFLECTED IN THE DATA SHOWING THE DRAMATIC INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF SUCH CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN THESE PROGRAMS, AND THE PROPORTION OF EXPENDITURES COMMITTED TO THEIR NEEDS. WE CHOSE TO GIVE MORE, NOT BECAUSE MORE IS NECESSARILY BETTER, BUT BECAUSE MORE IS NECESSARY WHERE THERE IS GREATER NEED.

EFFECT OF RECONCILIATION

NOW LET ME TURN TO WHAT HAPPENED TO CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS AFTER 1980 WHEN CONGRESS ENACTED RECONCILIATION LEGISLATION THAT REDUCED PROGRAM FUNDING. COMPARED TO 1980, WHEN FEDERAL EXPENDITURES FOR CHILD NUTRITION WERE \$4.4 BILLION, 60% OF WHICH WENT TO LOW-INCOME CHILDREN, 1983 EXPENDITURES WERE \$4.7 BILLION. AND EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, NEARLY \$3.7 BILLION OF THIS AMOUNT, OR 78% OF THESE FUNDS WERE EXPENDED FOR LOW-INCOME CHILDREN.

IN 1980, IT IS TRUE THAT THERE WERE 26.6 MILLION CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN THE SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM, COMPARED TO

23.1 MILLION IN 1983. HOWEVER, ALL OF THIS 3.5 MILLION DIFFERENCE IS IN THE PAID CATEGORY WHERE PARTICIPATION IS DOWN FROM 14.7 MILLION TO 11.2 MILLION. THE SAME TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN PARTICIPATED IN THE FREE AND REDUCED PRICE SEGMENT OF THE PROGRAM IN 1980 AS IN 1983 -- THAT IS 11.9 MILLION. HOWEVER, THE DISTRIBUTION IS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT WITH REDUCED PRICE PARTICIPATION GOING DOWN FROM 1.9 MILLION TO 1.6 MILLION, WHILE FREE PARTICIPATION WENT UP FROM 10 MILLION TO 10.3 MILLION.

WIC PROGRAM

FOR THE WIC PROGRAM, FEDERAL EXPENDITURES GREW TO APPROXIMATELY \$1.16 BILLION IN 1983 AND REPRESENTED 25% OF ALL CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM FUNDS. THIS IS AN INCREASE OF \$390 MILLION OVER THE FY80 FUNDING LEVEL FOR THIS PROGRAM AND COMPARES TO 16% OF CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM FUNDING IN 1980. MORE IMPORTANTLY, AVERAGE WIC PARTICIPATION IN FY1983 WAS APPROXIMATELY 2.6 MILLION, COMPARED TO 1980 WHEN AVERAGE PARTICIPATION WAS JUST UNDER 2 MILLION.

FACTS BEHIND STATISTICS

I AM POINTING OUT THESE STATISTICS FOR THOSE WHO CONTINUE TO ALLEGE THAT THE CHILD NUTRITION BUDGET CUTS OF 1981 WERE TOO LARGE, AND HARMED AN INORDINATE NUMBER OF LOW-INCOME CHILDREN -- AN ALLEGATION THAT I BELIEVE TO BE UNJUSTIFIED. IT IS UNJUSTIFIED BECAUSE IT LOOKS ONLY TO DOLLAR TERMS AND NOT TO THE HUMAN REALITY -- THE CHILDREN BEING SERVED, AND THEIR NEED. THE DATA INDICATES THAT LOW-INCOME CHILDREN CONTINUE TO BE SERVED IN SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS AND THAT A GROWING PROPORTION OF EXPENDITURES ARE BEING DISTRIBUTED ON THE BASIS OF NEED, IT ALSO APPEARS THAT GREATER NUMBERS OF CHILDREN WITH VERY LOW INCOME LEVELS ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAMS THAN IN THE PAST. THIS SOUNDS TO ME LIKE APPROPRIATE TARGETTING, AND I FIND IT HARD TO SEE THE DANGER IN IT.

IN THIS DIFFICULT TIME, I BELIEVE THAT THOSE OF US INVOLVED IN THE DELICATE BALANCING ACT OF ALLOCATING LIMITED FEDERAL RESOURCES SHOULD LOOK CAREFULLY AT THE HUMAN FACTOR INSTEAD OF DOLLARS. I BELIEVE THAT IF WE DO, WE WILL FIND THAT OUR CURRENT COMMITMENT TO CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS IS JUSTIFIED AND THAT THERE IS NO NEED TO EITHER CUT MORE CHILD NUTRITION FUNDS, OR RESTORE THEM.