

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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DOLE INTRODUCES ALTERNATIVE FOOD STAMP SAVINGS

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan.) today introduced several amendments to the Reagan food stamp bill designed to provide an alternative method to reach the total savings proposed for the program in the Reagan budget. The total package, which is cosponsored by Senators Leahy and Andrews, exceeds the amount in the President's budget and the amount assumed by the Senate by over \$100 million.

"I want to make it clear that I am supporting the President's approach on food stamps," Dole said. "I believe the Administration has done an outstanding job in its preparation of comprehensive legislation to re-authorize the food stamp program. I am in complete agreement with the vast majority of the provisions in the Administration bill and will support most of the savings proposals it includes. However, there are a few areas where I think savings can be achieved in ways which would have a less harmful effect on low-income Americans."

Perhaps the most important change in the Dole proposal is the deletion of the proposal to count school lunches against food stamp benefits. "With food stamp benefits averaging only 44 cents per person per meal, I cannot accept the argument that the school lunch program and the food stamp program provide duplicate benefits," Dole said.

The Dole proposal also: deletes the Administration's proposal to eliminate food stamps for residents of group homes for the blind and disabled, shelters for battered women and children, and certain drug and alcoholic rehabilitation centers; suggests that standard and shelter deductions be frozen until July 1983, and then adjusted to more accurately reflect the rate of inflation; substitute a method of prorating benefits to more than double the Administration's savings in this area; proposes that the block grant for Puerto Rico be deferred until fiscal year 1983, and tightens income eligibility limits there, effective fiscal year 1982 (the latter proposal would reduce the proportion of all Puerto Ricans participating in the program by about 10 percent, for a fiscal '82 savings of about \$75 million; would also be a useful first step toward proper targeting of the block grant in fiscal '83).

In addition to those modifications of the Reagan proposal, the Dole package also calls for cost of living increases granted each July 1 -- instead of the current January 1 -- to coincide with cost of living adjustments in other federal programs.

"In all, I am proposing a series of food stamp benefit reductions which would achieve nearly \$1.6 billion in savings in fiscal year 1982 and increasing amounts in future years," Dole said. "My package would achieve greater food stamp savings than are assumed in the Senate-passed budget reconciliation resolution."

"In addition to the modifications to the Reagan budget I outline in this legislation, my package includes the other savings proposed by the President. Among them are: setting a gross income eligibility limit of 130 percent of the poverty line; cancelling a series of benefit liberalizations scheduled to take effect Oct. 1, 1981; eliminating boarders; revising the household definition; recouping non-fraud overissuance; and implementing retrospective accounting and periodic reporting. I would make one minor change in the periodic reporting requirement to exempt all households which have no earned income and are composed exclusively of individuals over 60 years of age or blind or disabled recipients of SSI."

"The President's budget is intended to be a balanced package which does not place a disproportionate burden on any segment of the population. To reduce food stamp benefits beyond the level recommended by the President would ask too much of a sacrifice from low-income Americans. In addition to the savings proposals here, I intend to move in committee a series of proposals from a bill I introduced last week, S. 1016, the Food Stamp Accountability Act of 1981, which comprehensively addresses fraud, abuse and loopholes in the program. Also, I intend to move that the food stamp spending ceiling be eliminated."

The Senate Agriculture Committee will take up the proposal tomorrow.