

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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AG COMMITTEE ACCEPTS DOLE AMENDMENTS; STAVES OFF FOOD STAMP 'OVERLAP' CUTS

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan.), a senior member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, praised committee action that today rejected cutting benefits for children in the food stamp program who also receive free school lunches.

Dole, along with Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), had introduced an amendment to reject the Administration proposal to delete this "overlap." The committee agreed today with Dole and Leahy, voting in favor of the amendment by a vote of 14-3.

The committee also agreed with Dole and Leahy in rejecting calls for re-instatement of the purchase requirement for participants in the program. That vote was 10-7.

"These two votes were crucial ones in determining the make-up of the food stamp program," Dole said. "I am especially pleased with the committee's vote on the overlap provision. In my opinion, we averted putting many of the poorest families in the United States in a nutritional bind. This was a quandary that many of us wanted to avoid, for it struck at the heart of the beneficiaries of a great deal of our nutrition programs -- mainly mothers with children. As I have repeatedly said, with food stamp benefits averaging only 44 cents per person per meal, I don't see how it is possible to argue that there is any real overlap between the food stamp and school lunch programs.

"But besides the nutritional problems that the provision would have created, I am convinced that eliminating the overlap would have been an administrative headache for those in charge of the program on a local level."

Dole also said that the Dole-Leahy amendment reversing a move to re-instate the purchase requirement "avoided a complicating factor in the distribution of food stamps, especially as we are moving toward block grant approaches in the future."

Dole sponsored legislation that initially dissolved the cash payment system, replacing it with the current system in which no cash is exchanged.

It is estimated that the Administration program, along with alternative amendments being offered by Dole and Leahy will save somewhere in the neighborhood of \$1.6 billion. Other parts of that alternative package involve elimination of a "cap" and a revision of cost-of-living increases, both of which the committee also looks at today.