

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

NUTRITION SUBCOMMITTEE HEARINGS ON S. 17

FEBRUARY 15, 1983

S. 17 WAS INTRODUCED ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE 98th CONGRESS BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT WAS A MATTER OF SOME URGENCY THAT IT BE PUT ON A FAST LEGISLATIVE TRACK IN ORDER TO GET IT PASSED AND SIGNED INTO LAW SO THAT WE WOULD BE ABLE TO HELP LOW INCOME PEOPLE WHO ARE SUFFERING FROM THE EXTREME EFFECTS OF THIS RECESSION. DESPITE THE CURRENT NUTRITION PROGRAM STRUCTURE, THERE CONTINUE TO BE CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES WHO ARE NOT BEING REACHED BY THE BENEFITS OF THESE PROGRAMS, AND IT SEEMED THAT SOME KIND OF SUPPLEMENTAL EFFORT WAS NECESSARY.

THIS LEGISLATION WAS INSPIRED BY AN ACTIVE CONCERN THAT BECAME EVEN MORE FOCUSED WHEN I SAW A TV SPECIAL AND READ A SUNDAY NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE ARTICLE ON HUNGER IN AMERICA. IT SEEMS INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO MOST AMERICANS THAT, IN THIS LAND OF GREAT AGRICULTURAL ABUNDANCE, THERE COULD ACTUALLY BE PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION AT A TIME WHEN AGRICULTURAL SURPLUSES ARE OVERLOADING OUR CAPACITY TO STORE THEM THROUGH THE COMMODITY CREDIT CORPORATION.

THIS SENATOR BELIEVES THAT THERE HAS TO BE A PRACTICAL WAY TO LINK THESE TWO COMPONENTS AND TO PROVIDE A JUXTAPOSITION BETWEEN THE NEED FOR FOOD ON THE ONE HAND AND THE EXISTING SURPLUSES OF AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES. S. 17 IS INTENDED TO BE A COMMON SENSE APPROACH WHICH WOULD MAKE SURPLUS COMMODITIES AVAILABLE TO ELIGIBLE RECIPIENT AGENCIES LIKE FOOD BANKS, FOOD KITCHENS, CHURCHES, AND OTHER NONPROFIT, CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS WHO SERVE THE INCREASING NUMBERS OF NEEDY PEOPLE IN OUR SOCIETY, WHO HAVE BEEN UNUSUALLY HARD HIT BY THE CURRENT ECONOMIC RECESSION. IT MADE LITTLE SENSE TO THIS SENATOR THAT WE WERE PAYING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO STORE THESE AGRICULTURAL SURPLUSES, WHEN THIS MONEY COULD BE BETTER SPENT DISTRIBUTING THEM TO NEEDY RECIPIENTS AND PROCESSING THESE COMMODITIES INTO USABLE FOOD PRODUCTS.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, THIS LEGISLATION WILL PROVIDE ADMINISTRATIVE FUNDING TO HELP CARRY OUT THIS GOAL, AND PART OF THE COST WILL BE DEFRAIDED BY TRANSFERRING FUNDS THAT NOW PAY FOR STORAGE INTO FUNDING FOR DISTRIBUTION AND PROCESSING. ACCORDING TO USDA ESTIMATES, IT IS EXPECTED THAT ABOUT 1.043 BILLION WORTH OF COMMODITIES WILL BE UTILIZED UNDER THIS PROGRAM. IN ADDITION TO DAIRY PRODUCTS WHICH COMPRISE ABOUT 90 PERCENT OF THE CCC STOCKS, THIS LEGISLATION WOULD EXPAND THE CATEGORY OF BONUS COMMODITIES TO INCLUDE WHEAT, RICE, CORN, SOYBEANS, AND ANY OTHER PRODUCTS THE SECRETARY DECLARES TO BE IN SURPLUS. SECTION 32 SEASONAL COMMODITIES WOULD ALSO BE MADE AVAILABLE SIMILARLY TO THE WAY THEY ARE UTILIZED UNDER THE CURRENT SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM. FURTHER, THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE WOULD BE REQUIRED TO INFORM STATE AGENCIES AS TO THE AVAILABILITY OF COMMODITIES ON A REGULAR BASIS, SO THAT THEY CAN PLAN ACCORDINGLY BASED ON LOCAL NEED.