

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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DOLE INITIATIVE TO IMPROVE WIC NUTRITION PROGRAM

Washington, DC -- An initiative by Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole (R-KS) could result in expanding the number of recipients in the federal government's women, infants and children nutrition (WIC) program at no additional cost to taxpayers.

The Dole initiative, cosponsored by Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT), would modify WIC so that states have an incentive to obtain commodities, including infant formula, at concessional prices through a competitive bidding process.

"Tennessee has already instituted a program such as this," according to Sen. Dole, and "up to \$4 million is saved annually as a result. On a nationwide basis, I could see hundreds of thousands of additional recipients benefiting as a result of savings on infant formula alone."

At a time when other programs are being cut back, WIC has increased steadily both in funding levels and participation rates. In 1980, WIC received \$736 million and served about 1.9 million women, infants and children. This year WIC will receive \$1.7 billion, and the number of recipients numbers 3.4 million.

"Because of it's track record, WIC deserves the opportunity to expand gradually in order to serve more women, infants and children. And, of course, it's helpful that we're able to accomplish this at no additional cost to the taxpayers," noted Sen. Dole.

The Senate Agriculture Committee's nutrition subcommittee included the Dole-Leahy proposal when it marked-up commodity distribution legislation (S.236) today.

The underlying commodity distribution bill would have given the USDA authority to implement changes improving the efficiency of the current distribution program which operates in conjunction with the school lunch program, TEFAP, and elderly food programs.