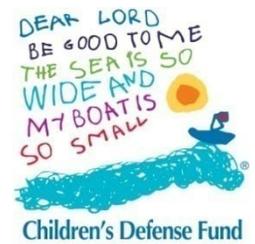


Children's Defense Fund

Child Nutrition Reauthorization

June 2010



President Obama has set a goal of ending childhood hunger by 2015, while also working to reduce childhood obesity. The federal child nutrition programs, which provide nutritious meals and snacks each day to millions of children, especially those in low-income families, are an important component in these efforts.

What is the Child Nutrition Act?

The Child Nutrition Act, first signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1966, expanded the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act of 1946 and authorizes all of the federal school meal and child nutrition programs. The Act provides funding to ensure low-income children have access to healthy foods. While these programs are permanent, they must be reviewed every five years by Congress through a process known as reauthorization.

The last reauthorization of the child nutrition programs took place in 2004. The Act was set to expire in September, 2009, but legislative efforts were employed to extend the programs until September, 2010. Several bills have been introduced in Congress this year to address child nutrition, the most comprehensive of which were introduced in April by the Senate Agriculture Committee (*Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010*) and in June by the House Education and Labor Committee (*Improving the Nutrition of America's Children Act of 2010*).

What are the *Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010* and the *Improving the Nutrition of America's Children Act of 2010*?

Each bill reauthorizes the federal child nutrition programs by providing the largest new investment in the child nutrition programs since their inception. While the two bills include similar measures to improve child nutrition in the U.S., the House bill (\$8 billion) allocates almost double the amount of funding that the Senate bill (\$4.5 billion) does over the next 10 years. Each, however, falls short of the proposed \$10 billion by President Obama.

The House and Senate bills are both focused on two major areas in child nutrition:

❖ **Path to End Childhood Hunger:** *Increase the enrollment of children in child nutrition programs and facilitate accessing benefits.*

• **The Senate Bill:**

- **Expands after school meals for at-risk children nationwide** as the Afterschool Meal Program is currently available in only 13 states.
- **Expands universal meal service through community eligibility**, allowing schools in high-poverty areas to offer free meals to all students without collecting paper applications.
- **Connects more eligible low-income children with school meals** by directly certifying children whose families receive SNAP benefits and Medicaid (in select districts) for free school meals.
- **Establishes performance bonuses for direct certification**, so that states are encouraged to improve their direct certification processes.
- **Includes the categorical eligibility of foster children** so that foster children are added to the list of those that are automatically eligible for free meals.
- **Promotes the availability and locations of summer food service program meal sites.**
- **Pilots innovative methods to feed hungry, low-income children** by providing mandatory funding to test pilot projects.

• **The House bill:**

- **Improves access to school meal programs** by using Medicaid/SCHIP data to directly certify children for the school lunch programs.
- **Provides enhanced universal meal access for eligible children** by using census data to determine school-wide eligibility.
- **Increases access to healthy breakfasts** by providing competitive grants to school districts.
- **Improves access to out of school meal programs** by ensuring summer and afterschool meal Programs.
- **Improves access to child nutrition programs for children in home-based child care.**
- **Leverages public and private partnerships** to promote community-wide strategies to reduce hunger and improve nutrition.
- **Improves management of the child nutrition programs** by increasing efficiency; improving program administration, support services, and program access; and modernizing the WIC program.
- **Simplifies School Meal program rules** and give schools greater flexibility for addressing program costs.

❖ **Promoting Health and Reducing Childhood Obesity:** *Enhance the nutritional quality of food served in school-based and preschool settings.*

- **The Senate bill:**

- **Helps schools improve the nutritional quality of school meals** through a performance-based increase in the federal reimbursement rate for school lunches (6 cents per meal).
- **Enhances national nutrition standards for all foods sold in schools** by giving the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to establish national nutrition standards for all foods sold on the school campus throughout the school day.
- **Promotes nutrition and wellness in child care settings** by revising the nutrition requirements for meals, snacks, and beverages through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).
- **Connects more children to healthy local produce** through farm-to-school programs.

- **The House bill:**

- **Helps schools improve the nutritional quality of school meals** by increasing the reimbursement rate for lunch by 6 cents per meal to assist schools in meeting meal requirements proposed by the Institute of Medicine.
- **Enhances funding for nutrition education in schools.**
- **Promotes collaboration and nutritional education sharing** between childcare and WIC programs.
- **Connects children to healthy produce from local farms.**
- **Improves food safety requirements** for school meals programs by extending the requirements to all areas that involve school food.
- **Supports improved communication** to speed notification of recalled school foods.
- **Ensures foodservice employees have access to food safety training.**

At a time when more than 12.5 million American children are obese and a record number of families are struggling to put nutritious meals on the table, school breakfast, lunch and other child nutrition programs have never been more important. Our children cannot wait any longer.

To learn more about the provisions of each bill, visit the Food Research and Action Center's (FRAC) website for an in-depth summary:

http://frac.org/Legislative/action_center/healthy_hungerfree_kids_act_highlights.htm