



Society for Nutrition Education Public Policy Legislative & Regulatory Bulletin January 2003

This newsletter highlights key legislative and regulatory news about nutrition education issues in Washington, D.C. This report is prepared by SNE's Public Policy Consultant, Waterman & Associates.

The 108th Congress Convenes

On January 7th, the 108th Congress opened for business with two new leaders, 65 freshmen and the familiar clamor of partisan wrangling in the House and Senate. In the House, Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-California, was elected minority leader, becoming the first woman to lead a party in either chamber of Congress. Pelosi replaces Rep. Dick Gephardt, D-Missouri, who stepped down from the post following the elections. While in the Senate, Sen. Bill Frist, R-Tennessee, became the Senate majority leader.

Lawmakers began a busy month of finishing up on legislation leftover from the 107th Congress and are working to reach resolution by the end of the month on the 11 outstanding funding bills for the current year, as well as for a temporary extension of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant to states and related welfare programs. In fact, the Senate completed passage of a \$390 billion spending legislation, a collection of the 11 appropriations bills left undone last year. In order to accommodate increases in education (\$5 billion) and other popular programs, the Senate has agreed to an across-the-board cut of nearly three percent. The House will seek a conference to work out the differences they have with the Senate. At issue will be whether the House supports the across-the-board-cut.

Composition of the New 108th Congress

The 100-member Senate has 11 new members: nine Republicans and two Democrats. Of the 11, four are moving over from the House; Frank Lautenberg, D-New Jersey, is returning after serving in the Senate from 1983 to 2001; and two -- Elizabeth Dole, R-North Carolina, and Lamar Alexander, R-Tennessee -- served in past cabinets. The new Senate is comprised of 51 Republicans, 48 Democrats and one Independent-

The 435-member House has 21 freshman Democrats and 33 newly elected Republicans – this brings the makeup of the House to 229 Republicans, 205 Democrats and one Independent. Most of the newly elected lawmakers have prepared for their political career by working in law, business or politics.

As the Republicans take control of the U.S. Senate for the second time in two years, they will be led by a relatively new face - Sen. Bill Frist from Tennessee. As the new majority leader, Frist faces some very daunting challenges ahead, with unfinished appropriations for fiscal year 2003, homeland security, economic stimulus packages and a very narrow two-vote margin with which to work. Working on the other side of the aisle from Frist is Tom Daschle, D-South Dakota, who assumed the post of minority leader.

On January 7th, Senate Minority Leader Daschle introduced, the “*Right Start Act of 2003*” (S. 18), which contains the provisions of the Improved Nutrition and Physical Activity Act (IMPACT), introduced last session aimed at reducing obesity, particularly among children. In addition, S.18 would improve early learning opportunities and promote preparedness by increasing the availability of Head Start programs, improve child care and reduce child hunger. The measure has 20 Democratic cosponsors.

Sen. Daschle's bill is being supported by the Senate Democratic Caucus, as well as Sens. Jeff Bingaman, D-New Mexico and Patrick Leahy, D-Vermont, who were cosponsors of IMPACT. There are no Republican sponsors at this time. S. 18 includes all provisions of IMPACT except the section proposing the National Nutrition Foundation. The Foundation component in the Senate's original IMPACT bill caused some concern in the 107th, and ultimately, the House decided not to include the Foundation section in their bill.

With the introduction of S. 18, the issue could take a partisan turn of what was once a bi-partisan effort. However, Republican lawmakers and congressional staff who worked on the IMPACT legislation in the 107th Congress are examining several options. Right now, the future of IMPACT as a bipartisan stand-alone bill in the Senate is undecided.

To review the text of Sen. Daschle's measure, go to <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/C?c108:/temp/~c108wHye4w>. And to view the IMPACT legislation that was introduced in the 107th Congress, go to <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c107:1:/temp/~c107IRiCRK::> for the House bill (H.R. 5412 – 107th) and <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c107:2:/temp/~c107IRiCRK::> for the Senate bill (S. 2821 – 107th).

Key Committees with Jurisdiction over Nutrition Education

The agriculture and education committees within each chamber also play important roles in pursuing successful nutrition education legislation. The Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee is chaired by Thad Cochran (R-MS), and the ranking member is Tom Harkin (D-IA). This committee examines food programs for the needy to assure their availability and nutrition value, as well as encouraging a balanced diet among the general population, and most importantly ensuring that food is safely grown, prepared and delivered.

Another Senate committee that works on nutrition education issues is the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, which is headed up by Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH). And across the aisle from Gregg is Sen. Edward Kennedy, who serves as the committee's ranking member. Both Sens. Gregg and Kennedy have a long history with the education committee and bring a great deal of experience to health issues. This committee works on the education side of nutrition issues. In the last Congress, this committee worked on the IMPACT legislation.

The House Agriculture Committee has a new chairman, Rep Bob Goodlatte (R-VA-6). Prior to becoming chairman of the full committee this year, Rep. Goodlatte chaired the Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry Subcommittee and served on the Livestock and Horticulture Subcommittee. Charles Stenholm (D-TX-17) will continue his previous position of ranking member.

The House Agriculture Committee has jurisdiction over the following welfare reform and food nutrition programs: administration of the food stamp program and the replacement for cash welfare programs (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)); implementation of the state's use of electronic benefits transfer (EBT) systems to improve the distribution of food benefits; effectiveness of provisions designed to curb food stamp trafficking and fraud; effectiveness of the food stamp quality control system; implementation and funding levels for the Emergency Food Assistance program and other commodity distribution programs; and nutrition monitoring oversight.

The U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce, being led by Chairman John Boehner (R-OH-8), and Ranking Member George Miller (D-CA-7), are aiming for an ambitious education policy agenda for the upcoming year. The committee's efforts will work towards improving special and higher education, successfully implementing the "No Child Left Behind Act," supporting our nation's teachers, and to concentrate its efforts on strengthening early childhood education. Strengthening the academic focus of the federal Head Start early childhood education program while preserving its current health and nutrition services for children is also an important goal for the committee.

HHS Funds Prevention Initiative to Help Americans Develop Healthier Lifetime Habits

The Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Secretary Tommy Thompson recently announced that President Bush's fiscal year 2004 budget plan will include an increase of \$100 million -- to \$125 million -- for a new initiative to prevent diabetes, obesity and asthma through community initiatives to achieve healthier lifestyles for hundreds of thousands of Americans. With a total budget of \$125 million, the "Steps to a Healthier US" initiative will use programs based on proven medical and health strategies to motivate and support Americans to make responsible health choices, especially among youth and seniors.

Projects under the initiative would include:

- β State programs to motivate and support responsible health choices that would reduce the burden of preventable disease;
- β Community initiatives to promote and enable healthful choices, especially those focused on youth and older Americans; and,
- β Health care and insurance systems that put prevention first and reduce people's risk factors for chronic disease and reduce potential health care complications.

Administration to Propose \$43 Million Increase for WIC in FY 2004

According to Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman, the Bush Administration will request a \$43 million (or one percent) increase in funding for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program for FY 2004, which begins on October 1, 2003. The overall budget requested for the program is \$4.72 billion. Of particular interest to SNE members is that the request includes an additional \$25 million to support child obesity prevention projects and breastfeeding programs, as well as a \$150 million contingency fund to cover additional WIC participants if needed. The President's budget for FY 2004 will be officially released on Monday, February 3rd.

Head Start Hearing and Rally to be Held in Washington on January 29

The National Head Start Association will hold a hearing and rally on Wednesday, January 29th to support the reauthorization of Head Start, the early childhood development program that serves low income children and their families. Participants include: Sens. Susan Collins, R-Maine, chairwoman of the Government Affairs Committee; Arlen Specter, R-Pennsylvania, chairman of the Veteran's Affairs Committee; George Voinovich, R-Ohio, chairman of the Select Committee on Ethics; Jeff Bingaman, D-New Mexico; Lincoln Chafee, R-Rhode Island; Christopher Dodd D-Connecticut; and Reps. Barney Frank, D-Massachusetts; Mike Castle, R-Delaware; Dennis Kucinich, D-Ohio; and Christopher Shays, R-Connecticut. The hearing will be held from 9 a.m. to noon in the Russell Senate Office Building, room 325.

FDA Forms New Task Force Aimed at Improving Consumer Nutrition Information

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has formed an 11-member internal task force that will develop scientific guidance for establishing standards for qualified health claims in foods. The group is a key element of an agency initiative that aims to make available to consumers more and better information about the health benefits of food and dietary supplements. The task force's chair will be FDA Deputy Commissioner Dr. Lester M. Crawford, and the Vice Chair will be Joseph A. Levitt, director of the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN). Here is a link to the FDA's news release – <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2003/NEW00864.html>.

FDA's 2003 Science Forum to Be Held April 24-25

The 9th Annual FDA Science Forum is scheduled to be held in Washington, D.C., April 24-25. It is open to the public. This forum brings FDA scientists together with industry, academia, consumers and others to share information about the science-based mission of the agency. Discussion topics for this year's forum include risk assessment and public health initiatives in the wake of September 11th. To register, go to <http://www.dscienceforum.org>.

***** Share the Nutrition Education Story With Your Lawmakers *****

For the next two years, your lawmakers will make hundreds of decisions that will affect nutrition education programs, as well as your profession/job. Make sure they decide in your favor by getting to know them now and remind them how important nutrition education is for our country.

As your representative and senators begin work on critical legislation, you want nutrition education at the top of their minds. Here's how to share your personal story with your lawmakers:

- 1. Meet your lawmakers.** Make an appointment to meet your lawmakers or a member of their staff either in your own area or in their Washington office. When they are in your district, attend an event they host (i.e. Town Hall Meeting). Be sure to introduce yourself, tell them about your profession and the challenges you face, and that you're a member of SNE. This is especially important now if you have new lawmakers.
- 2. Write a letter.** Congratulate new lawmakers on the election, or if your district has changed, introduce yourself and let your lawmaker know about your concerns as a nutrition education specialist. Keep your letter concise, but mention the same critical points noted above - your profession, your concerns and your SNE membership.
- 3. Build relationships with your lawmakers.** Why not invite your representative to a local meeting to speak?
- 4. Keep in touch.** Throughout the year, stay in touch with your lawmakers when you know they are considering legislation that affects nutrition education issues. Send them articles ([via fax or e-mail](#)) about critical nutrition education issues. During this session of Congress, lawmakers are likely to consider significant child nutrition reauthorization and health care bills, among many other measures.

It's important to make our voice heard!

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