



Society for Nutrition Education Public Policy Legislative & Regulatory Bulletin June 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.

Bipartisan IMPACT Bill Introduced in the Senate

On June 3, 2003, Senators Bill Frist (R-TN), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), and Christopher Dodd (D-CT) introduced S. 1172, the Improved Nutrition and Physical Activity Act (IMPACT) for the 108th Congress. At the introduction of the bill, Sen. Frist said, "This [obesity] epidemic has steadily increased to a level twice what it was thirty years ago. Obesity now affects over sixty percent of adults and thirteen percent of children and adolescents. This bill will help Americans make healthy decisions about nutrition and physical activity. It emphasizes youth education so that healthy habits can begin early. It funds demonstration projects to find innovative ways of improving eating and exercise habits."

As of mid-June, the Senate IMPACT bill had nine bipartisan cosponsors: Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Hilary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), Mike DeWine (R-OH), Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Richard Lugar (R-IN), Patty Murray (D-WA), Jeff Sessions (R-AL), Ted Stevens (R-AK) and John Warner (R-VA).

The Senate version of the bill differs considerably from the House IMPACT bill, H.R. 716, which was introduced by Rep. Mary Bono (R-CA) in February 2003 and currently has 52 bipartisan cosponsors. The Senate version has only two titles, whereas H.R. 716 has eleven. S. 1172 includes the following provisions:

- β Training grants for health care professionals and students, including registered dietitians, to identify, treat and prevent obesity and eating disorders;
- β Grants to appropriate state and local entities to carry out community-based activities to promote physical activity and access to healthy foods;
- β Grants to educational entities in states and local communities to educate and counsel individuals about the importance of good nutrition and physical activity;
- β Commissions a study by the Institute of Medicine to evaluate the food and nutrition assistance programs in the United States to see if they are based on the latest scientific evidence and do not, unintentionally, promote unhealthy habits or obesity; and
- β Commissions a report from the Secretary of Health and Human Services on the current research being conducted on causes and health implications of overweight and obesity.

In May of 2003, SNE's Advisory Committee on Public Policy (ACPP) responded to the announcement that the IMPACT bill would be introduced by sending a support letter to Frist, Bingaman and Dodd's offices. The letter supported and identified the key provisions of the bill. During Sen. Frist's introductory remarks, he mentioned that SNE was a supporting organization as well as identifying the other supporters. SNE's support letter can be found on the organization's Web site under the "Positions and Resolutions" link at www.sne.org. To view the congressional record comments by Sen. Frist that mentions SNE as a supporting organization of IMPACT, go to <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/F?r108:1./temp/~r1082GayCu:e92576>.

S. 1172 has been referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, which is chaired by Senator Judd Greg (R-NH). To view S. 1172 online, go to: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d108:s.01172>; The House IMPACT bill can be found at <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d108:h.r.007166>:

National Hunger Awareness Day Brings About “Call to Congress” on Child Nutrition Reauthorization

On June 5th, 2003, the second annual National Hunger Awareness Day was held. To commemorate this day, an initiative was announced - a national "Call to Congress." This "Call" was supported by more than 2,000 groups asking for improved investments in federal nutrition programs subject to reauthorization legislation this year.

America's Second Harvest, the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) as well as representatives of the Child Nutrition Forum and others joined Members of Congress for release of the "Call to Congress," urging reinvestments in federal child nutrition programs. SNE officially signed-on to the "Call to Congress" as a supporting group.

The initiative emphasizes that, "Congress has a unique opportunity this year in the child nutrition reauthorization law to ensure that millions of children, particularly low income infants and children, have improved access to nutritious food at home (through the WIC Program), in child care (through the Child and Adult Care Food Program--CACFP), in school (in breakfast and lunch programs), during out-of-school time (in afterschool and summer programs) and in homeless and domestic violence shelters." The coalition "Call" makes specific recommendations for Congress on the following priorities:

- β Giving working families access to nutritious food for their children in safe and nurturing environments in family child care homes and after-school and summer programs;
- β Creating and enhancing the nutritional environment to promote healthy eating habits;
- β Giving every child an equal opportunity to succeed in school by strengthening the school breakfast program; and
- β Supporting full utilization of the programs that provide America's children with nutritious meals.

Congressional action to reauthorize federal child nutrition programs is slated for completion by October 1, 2003. Action is expected to begin with a mark-up of legislation this summer in the Senate Agriculture Committee and then in the House Education and the Work Force Committee. See the National Call to Action and the list of more than 2,300 organizational signers, available online at <http://www.frac.org/html/news/calltocongress.pdf>. To view SNE's Child Nutrition Reauthorization position paper, go to SNE's Web site at www.sne.org under Positions and Resolutions.

SNE Provides Child Nutrition Reauthorization Statement to the Institute of Medicine's Committee on Prevention of Obesity in Children and Youth

On June 16, 2003, the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) Committee on Prevention of Obesity in Children and Youth conducted a workshop, "Strategies for Developing School-Based Policies that Promote Nutrition and Physical Activity Among Children and Youth." The workshop was held in order to gather information to help the committee conduct their study. The Institute of Medicine is undertaking this study to assess the nature of childhood obesity in the United States and will develop recommendations to decrease its prevalence that focus on prevention. The committee is considering local, environmental, medical, dietary, and other factors responsible for the increasing prevalence of childhood obesity. It will also identify promising methods for prevention and suggests research opportunities. After the committee gathers and examines their research, it will draft a report, which will go through rigorous review by experts who are anonymous to the committee.

In response to the IOM committee's workshop, SNE's Advisory Committee on Public Policy (ACPP) developed a statement to the IOM committee. SNE's statement highlights the organization's eight recommendations to strengthen the federal child nutrition programs, particularly as it relates to nutrition education.

In the statement, SNE also identified physical activity as a key component to address as it specifically relates to the IOM workshop's goals. The statement said, "Additionally, SNE recommends the implementation of educational programs that guide and motivate individuals, families and communities to improve the nutritional quality of their dietary choices and to increase their physical activity levels. SNE recognizes the importance of increasing physical activity, particularly in youth because children need physical activity for growth and development, as well as for long-term health. SNE supports efforts for children through physical education in school, programs in parks, and other community clubs as well as providing information to families about increasing activity. SNE believes that physical activity will help youth improve school performance, establish positive health habits and possibly prevent the onset of adulthood diseases."

SNE's IOM statement can be found on SNE's Web site under the "Positions and Resolutions" link at www.sne.org. For more information on the IOM committee, go to <http://www.iom.edu/iom/iomhome.nsf/Pages/FNB+Obesity>.

Castle Introduces Legislation to Help Reduce Childhood Obesity

On May 22, 2003, Rep. Michael Castle (R-DE-at large) introduced legislation to encourage community and school-based activities to help reduce and prevent obesity among children. The Obesity Prevention Act, H.R. 2227, authorizes federal funding for state and local nutrition education and physical fitness initiatives. The goal of the legislation is to create a comprehensive, coordinated nutrition and physical fitness awareness and obesity prevention program.

Specifically, the bill:

- β Creates 20 new state demonstration nutrition and fitness programs for students;
- β Develops a pilot program for 100 local school districts to promote healthy eating habits and increase physical fitness;
- β Establishes a national commission to facilitate coordination between federal agencies and identifies ways to aid in the treatment and prevention of obesity;
- β Creates the President's Health and Fitness Awards to recognize schools for overall fitness and nutrition, including an awards program; and
- β Adds nutrition and health education programs to the list of allowable activities for after-school programs.

Rep. Castle serves as the Chair of the House Education and Workforce's Education Reform Subcommittee. The congressman plans to lead efforts this year to renew federal child nutrition programs. The subcommittee will address the issue of childhood obesity in the reauthorization legislation later this summer. To view H.R. 2227 online, go to <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d108:h.r.02227>.

House Committee Approves Head Start Reauthorization Bill

On June 19th, the House Education and the Workforce Committee approved legislation to reauthorize and overhaul the Head Start program to give states more authority over the early childhood education effort. The panel approved the measure (H.R. 2210) on a party-line vote of 27-20 after defeating several Democratic amendments that sought to increase funding and expand eligibility. The committee, which began marking up the measure on June 18th, adopted amendments to include homeless families in the program, strengthen the role of fathers in program activities, and integrate existing services with state demonstration projects that would be authorized for eight states. The legislation would allow a pilot project for states to coordinate their own early childhood programs with Head Start centers, which receive federal funding but are operated by local public and private agencies. The bill would authorize

\$202 million in new funding for fiscal 2004. Democrats called that amount insufficient to pay salaries that would be competitive enough to retain highly qualified teachers.

H.R. 2210 was introduced by House Education and Workforce Education Reform Subcommittee Chair Michael Castle (R-DE). For more information on this bill, go to <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d108:h.r.02210>.

Federal Government Report Finds that More Efforts Are Needed To Improve School Meal Nutrition

A May 2003 report by the General Accounting Office examined the various aspects of the National School Lunch Program. The report focused on: the extent to which meals were meeting nutrition standards; whether schools were encouraging healthy eating; identified barriers schools were facing in accomplishing this; and what innovative steps they had taken to overcome the barriers. The report said that while schools are moving toward meeting school lunch nutrition requirements, more improvements are needed. "Most students have access to foods of little nutritional value, such as soft drinks and candy, at school. Barriers to providing nutritious meals and encouraging healthy eating included budget pressures and competing time demands. Also, schools paid for special activities or other items not covered in the school's budget with profits from vending machines and snack bar sales."

To view the GAO's full report, go to <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d03506.pdf>.

USDA's Budget for Nutrition Programs Released

On May 22, 2003, Eric Bost, the Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), testified before the Senate Appropriations Agriculture Subcommittee in support of the Administration's \$44.2 billion budget request for fiscal year 2004 for the nutrition programs. This is the budget that the President proposed in early 2003.

The budget request included \$27.7 billion for the Food Stamp Program, enough to serve an average of 21.6 million people each month; \$11.4 billion for the Child Nutrition Programs, enough to support an increase in children served school lunch from 28 million to over 29 million and increase breakfast participation from 8 million to over 9 million; \$4.8 billion for the WIC Program; \$95 million for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP); and \$140 million for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).

Under Secretary Bost stressed the importance of combating obesity, ensuring program access, and strengthening program integrity and management. Bost's comments on the budget can be accessed on USDA's Web site at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/Speeches/CT052203.html>.

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