



## **Society for Nutrition Education Public Policy Legislative & Regulatory Bulletin December 2002**

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.

### **SNE Signs FRAC Letter Urging Congress to Increase Funding for Child Nutrition Reauthorization**

Recently, the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) invited the Society for Nutrition Education (SNE) to sign a letter urging Congress to boost spending on child nutrition programs by approximately 10 percent (an additional \$1 billion). The final request letter endorsed by SNE and a total of 45 national nutrition-related organizations was sent to the House and Senate Budget and Agricultural Committees at the end of November 2002. This proposed funding increase would ensure that year-round meals are available to all children as well as to help children learn healthful eating habits.

The request letter urges Congress "to take the first step by committing new federal dollars dedicated to strengthening and expanding our nation's child nutrition programs." Child nutrition programs will be reauthorized next year, such as the WIC program, breakfast and lunch program, and after school and summer programs.

In addition, the letter outlines four national goals that can be attained through the investment of funding these programs:

1. "Working families need access to nutritious food for their children in safe and nurturing environments in preschool child care, after school and during the summer." This is attained through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).
2. "Healthy eating habits help to prevent childhood obesity and other nutrition-related diseases." The WIC Program, CACFP, School Lunch and Breakfast Programs and after school snacks and suppers support this goal.
3. "Every child must have an equal opportunity to succeed in school." Hunger affects a child's ability to do well in school. WIC children tend to show better cognitive performance in school.
4. "The child nutrition programs provide America's children with nutritious food and all children should have access to it." Paperwork and accounting requirements put up barriers to this goal. The programs should be administratively less difficult for sponsors and parents.

Congress passed the National School Lunch Program in 1946 to safeguard the health and well-being of the nation's children and to encourage the domestic consumption of nutritious foods. Since then, Congress has greatly improved child nutrition programs, but the letter emphasizes the need to strengthen child nutrition programs to better serve children and families and adjust to changes in our families, workplaces, schools and communities.

To view the full FRAC letter sent to the congressional committees as well as the list of supporting organizations who signed on, view the Web link <http://www.frac.org/html/news/Budgetletter.pdf>.

### **Senator Frist, the Senate's Only Doctor, Replaces Trent Lott as Majority Leader**

Republican senators selected Sen. Bill Frist (R-TN) as their new leader by a unanimous vote during a conference call on December 23. Frist says he plans to focus on supporting the war against terrorism, boosting the economy, and reforming health care policies, although he will not lay out a specific agenda and strategy until after the holidays. Frist's appointment came in the wake of Majority Leader Trent Lott's (R-MS) announcement on Friday, December 20, 2002 that he would resign his leadership post as Majority Leader but will continue to serve out his term, which has four more years.

Frist, 50, arrived for his first term in Congress in 1995 and as head of the National Republican Senatorial Committee helped lead Republicans in a successful effort to gain back the majority in the Senate in the 2002 elections. As the Senate's only medical doctor, Frist has been a vocal proponent of health insurance and prescription drug reforms. Once considered as a possible running mate for President Bush in 2000, Frist is viewed as a close ally of the White House.

With Sen. Frist serving as majority leader, important health and nutrition education legislation will have a greater chance of reaching the Senate floor for debate. Frist is the chief sponsor of the Improved Nutrition and Physical Activity Act (IMPACT) introduced in July 2002. The IMPACT legislation, which is expected to be re-introduced in the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, would establish grants to provide health services for improved nutrition, increased physical activity and obesity prevention. The Senator spoke to national health and education leaders who participated in the Healthy Schools Summit in October 2002 where he expressed particular concern with the increasing prevalence of childhood obesity. Frist is also a strong supporter of Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Mark McClellan and has worked on health issues with him in the past.

### **FTC Joins Forces With FDA's Consumer Health Information Initiative**

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has joined forces with the Food Drug Administration (FDA) in their new consumer health initiative, which was unveiled Dec. 18, 2002. The FDA's plan will help the FTC to eliminate phony health claims by increasing enforcement actions against false or misleading dietary supplement claims and will provide new guidance that will allow manufacturers of conventional foods to make a greater range of accurate, science-based claims about the health benefits of their products.

The Nutrition Labeling and Education Act (NLEA) provided the initial foundation for the new FDA-led initiative by creating nutrition labeling requirements that gives consumers clear, understandable information about the nutrition content of food. The NLEA enabled marketers to provide consumers with important, truthful claims, supported by science.

There are two important issues that warrant the improvement: 1) The dietary supplement market has experienced a surge in recent years because of increased consumer interest in health and nutrition, and 2) Too much diet and health information is being driven into the marketplace.

The cooperation between FTC and FDA aims to challenge deceptive health claims and to follow recent enforcement suits against deceptive weight loss product marketing. The two agencies' joint efforts have produced several coauthored health-related consumer education brochures. To access the FTC's online complaint database called *Consumer Sentinel*, go to <http://www.consumer.gov/sentinel>. And for more information on FDA's consumer health initiative, check out FDA's white paper, which is posted on their Web site at <http://www.fda.gov/oc/nutritioninitiative/whitepaper.html>.