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Food and Nutrition Legislation

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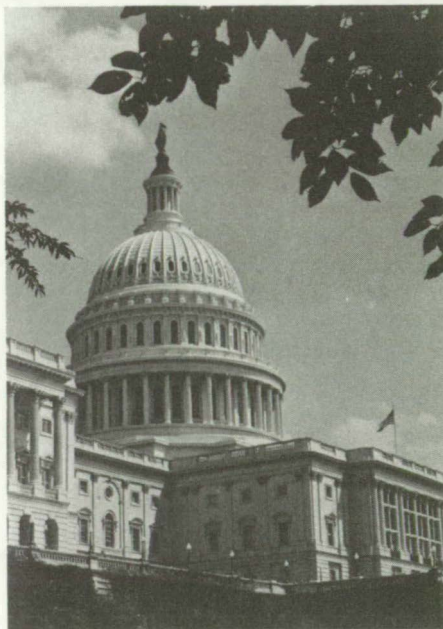
Congressional action will affect five child nutrition programs in fiscal year 1985. Modification and funding activity will affect the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), the Nutritional Education and Training (NET) Program, and State Administrative Expenses (SAE). The authority to purchase commodities for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) must also be extended.

S. 2545 - Sen. Jesse Helms (NC)

This bill, called the "Nutrition Programs Reform Act," would modify and reauthorize the SFSP and WIC. One major change included in this bill would be to switch the SFSP from an entitlement program to one subject to Congressional allocation. The fiscal year 1985 allocation would be \$60 million for the SFSP, compared with \$105 million in 1984.

The bill would require that eligibility for the SFSP be determined for each individual. The current system accepts all children at participating public and private nonprofit camps and schools located in an area where more than half the children are from families with incomes at or below 185 percent of the Federal poverty level. Government agency sites for the SFSP, such as municipal recreation programs, would be eliminated. The bill would also reduce meals served to only lunch rather than lunch and either breakfast or a snack.

The WIC program would be reauthorized for 1 year at \$1.25 billion, \$110 million below 1984 funding. Several measures are designed to reduce the cost of the program. For example, a minimum number of participants per office could be established to close smaller offices and incorporate them into larger, more cost-efficient offices; meals for children who have access to other food assistance, such as the Child Care Food Program (CCFP), would have to be deducted from the family's program benefits; WIC and CSFP would be prohibited from operating



in the same geographical area to avoid duplication of services; costs incurred in initiating WIC in an area would no longer be absorbed by the Federal Government; benefits would be prorated for the initial month for those joining after the first of the month; and outreach activities to encourage participation in the program and informational material in languages other than English would no longer be required.

S. 2607 - Sen. Walter Huddleston (KY)

The "Anti-Hunger Act of 1984" would reauthorize the SFSP, WIC, SAE, and commodity distribution programs for 4 years, and permanently authorize NET at \$8 million.

Child nutrition program changes would include: providing storage and distribution costs to States for up to 3 percent of the value of USDA commodities donated to schools; allowing schools with annual tuition fees of greater than \$1,500 to participate in the NSLP again; again reimbursing day care centers under the CCFP for three meals per day plus two snacks; and providing a hardship deduction for unusually high medical expenses in determining NSLP and School Breakfast Pro-

gram (SBP) free and reduced-price meal eligibility. It would also reimburse schools an additional 6 cents per breakfast to improve the nutritional quality of the SBP and decrease the cost to students of reduced-price school lunches and breakfasts to 25 cents from 40 and to 15 cents from 30, respectively. In order to require verification of eligibility, the Federal Government would have to provide administrative funds for such procedures. Children in nonprofit kindergartens would be allowed to participate in the Special Milk Program. The bill would also provide incentives for schools in needy areas to join the NSLP and SBP, such as funding for food service equipment. The bill would also clarify that NSLP facilities may be used for elderly nonprofit feeding programs.

The WIC program would be reauthorized at \$1.52 billion for 1985, with increases of approximately 8 percent per year for the next 3 years.

S. 2617 - Sen. Robert Dole (KS)

This bill would reauthorize all five child nutrition programs for 4 years. Although the WIC program would be maintained at the current participation level of 3 million women, infants, and children, changes would include: prorated benefits for the initial month for those joining the program after the first of the month; counting pregnant women as two individuals in determining eligibility; eliminating mandatory publicity of WIC availability and eligibility criteria; and requiring States to seek repayment of benefits issued inappropriately due to intentional misrepresentation of information by recipients, except when the cost of recovery exceeds the amount to be collected.

The bill would raise the ceiling for the NET to \$10 million from \$5 million, with the additional money targeted to nutrition education for food stamp recipients. It would also authorize a study to determine the feasibility of a program in which the Federal Government would provide a free lunch to all school children.