

REAUTHORIZING CERTAIN SCHOOL LUNCH AND CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2004

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3232) to reauthorize certain school lunch and child nutrition programs for fiscal year 2004, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3232

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

**SECTION 1. REAUTHORIZATION.**

(a) EXCLUSION OF CERTAIN MILITARY HOUSING ALLOWANCES.—Section 9(b)(7) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1758(b)(7)) is amended by inserting “and through March 31, 2004” after “and 2003”.

(b) CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM.—Section 17(a)(2)(B)(i) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1766(a)(2)(B)(i)) is amended by striking “September 30, 2003” and inserting “March 31, 2004”.

(c) REIMBURSEMENT TO STATES UNDER COMMODITY DISTRIBUTION PROGRAMS.—Section 15(e) of the Commodity Distribution Reform Act and WIC Amendments of 1987 (7 U.S.C. 612c note; Public Law 100-237) is amended by striking “October 1, 2003” and inserting “April 1, 2004”.

(d) FUNDING MAINTENANCE OF COMMODITY DISTRIBUTION PROGRAMS.—Section 14(a) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1762a(a)) is amended by striking “September 30, 2003” and inserting “March 31, 2004”.

(e) SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN.—

(1) Section 13(q) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1761(q)) is amended by striking “the fiscal year beginning” and all that follows through “October 1, 2003” and inserting “the period beginning October 1, 1977, and ending March 31, 2004”.

(2) Section 18(f)(2) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1769(f)(2)) is amended by striking “of fiscal years 2001 through 2003” and inserting “beginning October 1, 2000, and ending March 31, 2004”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) and the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 3232.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Delaware?

There was no objection.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support bipartisan legislation that extends certain child nutrition provisions through March 31 of 2004. This extension is vital to ensure that low-income children have access to safe and nutritious food in school, after school, and during the summer months.

Members of the Committee on Education and the Workforce in the House and of the Committee on Agriculture in the Senate are busy preparing legislation to reauthorize and improve all the child nutrition programs included in the Child Nutrition and the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch acts. Included in these acts are: the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, WIC, and the Child and Adult Care Food, After School Snack, and Summer Food Service Programs. These programs are a critical part of our Nation's effort to ensure that needy children in America do not go hungry.

I have been pleased with the progress made in preparing a reauthorization bill for introduction. Despite our progress, however, committee members do not want to draft such important legislation in haste and so need additional time to ensure that any changes to the current law best serve the interests of the children whom these programs are intended to reach. The extensions included in this legislation can assure us that millions of needy children will not lose access to meals and snacks that are needed for their healthy growth and development and academic success in school.

Millions of children, including many whose mothers and fathers serve in America's armed services, rely on these programs each day. Without this legislation, many children who reside with their parents in privatized military housing would lose the benefit of free or reduced-price school meals. In Delaware, approximately 250 children will benefit from this extension, and up to 100,000 children nationwide. Taking these subsidies from children when many of their mothers and fathers are fighting for our Nation's security at home and abroad would have a devastating effect on these families.

This legislation also would continue the availability of healthy meals and snacks to low-income children enrolled in for-profit child care centers. Additionally, this legislation would allow schools, churches, and community organizations to operate Summer Food Service Program sites and in 14 States to continue special pilot programs that reduce paperwork and thereby increase the number of disadvantaged children who receive free meals and snacks during the summer months.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few reasons why H.R. 3232 should be approved today with unanimous support. The child nutrition provisions that would be extended through this legislation benefit America's most vulnerable children. It is our duty as lawmakers to ensure that these at-risk children and their families can continue to receive the benefits for which they have been deemed eligible until the Congress can complete its work on legislation reauthorizing both the Child Nutrition Act and the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act.

I conclude by asking my fellow colleagues to please join me in support of H.R. 3232.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am pleased to join the chairman, the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE), in urging passage of H.R. 3232 to ensure that the authority for important child nutrition programs does not expire before the House leadership makes the time to debate these most important issues in the committee and on the floor.

I do hope, however, that when the time comes for the real reauthorization of child nutrition, we can work together in this same bipartisan way to make sure every eligible infant and child in this Nation has access to nutritious food: at home, through the WIC program; in child care, through the Child and Adult Food program; in school, through the School Breakfast and Lunch programs; during out-of-school time, through After-School and Summer programs; and in homeless and domestic violence shelters.

Even modest investments in the child nutrition programs will reduce hunger and improve children's health, their well-being, and their educational success.

Healthy children are the best investment we can make in this Nation's future. Unfortunately, too many children in America are hungry. The 2003 key national indicators of children's well-being reports that nearly 46 percent of American children who live in poverty were in food-insecure households, households that reported difficulty in obtaining enough food and increased use of emergency food sources resulting in reduced food intake and resulting in hunger.

At the same time, too many American children are at risk because they are obese. Childhood obesity rates in America have tripled over the past 20 years, resulting in children suffering from the early onset of such traditional adult diseases as hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease.

This week, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) and I, as well as other Democratic members of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, will be introducing a bill that increases access to the child nutrition programs and sets the stage for improving the nutritional quality of the foods available to children during the school day. Our bill establishes a Federal policy of “do no harm” to ensure that no eligible children are pushed off school food programs. It also eliminates the reduced-price category and increases direct certification so that more children are eligible for free school meals.

The Democratic child nutrition bill also makes it easier for new moms and their babies to participate in the WIC program.

By calling on experts from the Institute of Medicine to develop nutrition standards for the foods sold in competition with school meals, the Democratic

child nutrition meal will make it easier for schools to offer students healthy foods everywhere on school grounds.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle have other ideas on child nutrition reauthorization as well. The money is there to fund all of these ideas if the administration and the Congress want to do it. If we can afford to reconstruct Iraq, if we can afford tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, and tax breaks to offshore corporations, we can afford to feed hungry American children and help them eat healthy food.

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I look forward to working with the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) and all of my colleagues to expand and improve the child nutrition programs.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3232 and in support of making nutritious food available to our Nation's poor and low-income children and not to leave any hungry child behind.

The National School Lunch Program is just one step in developing our children into the prosperous, successful individuals we want them to become. Poorly fed children have more difficulty learning, are less attentive in class and suffer more chronic problems, such as absenteeism and tardiness, than children who are properly nourished. According to the Food Research and Action Center, proper nutrition improves a child's behavior, school performance, and overall cognitive development. All in all, properly nourished children more actively participate in the education experience, which benefits them, their fellow students, and the entire school community.

Studies have shown what we already know, that healthy school meals play a critical and positive role in students' development and learning. According to the United States Department of Agriculture in 2000, 10.5 percent of all households, representing 20 million adults and 13 million children, were considered food insecure due to a lack of resources. In 2001, Illinois reported 9.2 percent of households to be food insecure, which represents 3,239,229 children under the age of 18.

By making nutritious meals available to all school children, the National School Lunch Program should ensure us that every child who needs a healthy meal can receive one. Unfortunately, the plan does not yet do that. In a State like Illinois and a city like Chicago, where there are large numbers of low-income people, poor children, we need to make sure that we revise every

plan and have every opportunity to have nutritious meals for these individuals without undue burden of paperwork that sometimes would cause them to be left out. I support this legislation and hope that we are going to make it easier to receive the benefit.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Georgia (Ms. MAJETTE).

Ms. MAJETTE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

I rise today to stress the importance of child nutrition and to support the extension of these programs with the passage of H.R. 3232. These programs will be reauthorized today with little fanfare. Their significance, however, far exceeds the attention we will devote to them.

The first time Congress authorized a nutrition program for our children was during the Great Depression in 1935. At that time, millions of children came to school unable to pay for their school lunches. Malnutrition among children was a national concern. Despite our country's poor economic conditions, Congress realized that its first priority must be to feed our Nation's hungry children. Today, child nutrition programs have been expanded, and they represent the best of America because after all, a hungry child cannot learn.

I am pleased to note that these programs are very successful in feeding hungry children. In my home State of Georgia, more than 600,000 children are given financial support to purchase much-needed lunch meals. For many, it is the only meal they will have all day. There are more than 300,000 children who also participate in the subsidized School Breakfast Program in Georgia.

Since the National School Lunch Act was first enacted in 1946, attention to the nutritional value of these school lunches has steadily increased. We have learned that poor nutrition leads to impaired cognitive development and reduced school performance. That is why successful Head Start programs point to good nutrition as a necessary element to teach our neediest children. We cannot teach our children without first giving them the essential nutrition so vital to their ability to learn.

Despite the renewed focus on nutrition, we are in the midst of a public health crisis in terms of obesity. Nearly 30 percent of adults and 15 percent of children in our Nation are now categorized as obese. With obesity comes the increased risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, insomnia and other health-related difficulties; and the medical costs associated with this crisis are estimated to be as much as \$100 billion per year. So it is clear that we need to act now to curb this crisis.

Although most Americans know eating more fruits and vegetables is a necessary part of maintaining good nutrition, just last week a new study found that more than 40 percent of toddlers in the Women, Infants, and Children, or the WIC, program did not eat any fruit

at all on the day of the survey. In fact, the WIC program does not even provide access to fruits and vegetables.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is hope. Last week I visited East Lake Elementary School in Atlanta and asked the fifth grade class what they wanted to add to their school lunch menu. They requested kiwis, strawberries and plums. They did not ask for cake or cookies, so they understand the importance of eating a variety of fruits and vegetables.

As Congress reauthorizes these programs, we must not forget their importance, and we must not forget that they continue, and we continue, to feed our hungry children. At the same time, we must ensure that our child nutrition programs move forward with a new knowledge about what is best for the health of our children.

Through these programs, we will have the opportunity to teach our children the eating habits that will allow them to protect their own health throughout their lives, and we can teach them the fundamentals of good health, that an apple a day is not just for teachers any more.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT).

(Mr. HOLT asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, today we are considering H.R. 3232, a bill to reauthorize certain school lunch and child nutrition programs. While I am glad to see that these programs will not expire, I am concerned about making progress toward a full 5-year reauthorization, and I know the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) intends to see that we have a good reauthorization, and I look forward to working with the gentleman and the rest of the committee in a bipartisan way.

I would like to take this opportunity to discuss what I see are some issues that must be addressed in any new reauthorization. Ensuring healthy children is a worthwhile investment in the future of millions of children and in the future of our country's economic well-being. And as has been discussed by the gentlewoman from Georgia (Ms. MAJETTE), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS), there are children in America that go hungry during the school day and others who battle illness caused by poor nutrition.

The documentary evidence is clear, and we do not need to review it here; it coincides with common sense: School child nutrition programs help children learn. Meal programs offered in schools and child care settings and after school and summer programs and through WIC offer an ideal way to address child health issues directly, and to build healthful eating habits.

When we do get a 5-year reauthorization, we should require local education

authorities to establish a school nutrition policy, I would suggest by July of 2005, that, at a minimum, gives the school food director operational responsibility for foods sold on campus. We should request that the Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Sciences recommend to the Secretary nutritional standards for school foods. The Food and Nutrition Service should be required to place a greater emphasis on fruits and vegetables in the commodities programs and school meals.

Mr. Speaker, we need to pass a reauthorization that expands the current fruit and vegetable pilot programs so they reach more students. We must authorize grants to nonprofits and local school districts for farm-to-cafeteria projects which include nutritional education activities, which incorporate the participation of school children in farm and agricultural education projects.

In addition, we must eliminate the reduced price category of meals to allow children and families up to 185 percent of poverty to receive a free meal. The children that are designated in this reduced-price category are really between a rock and a hard place when it comes to eating at school. These are children that are both hungry and in many cases embarrassed because their parents are often not able to send the money to school to pay for their meals. It would be better if this category were removed and all children eligible would be treated the same in the nutrition programs.

Mr. Speaker, as we reauthorize the Child Nutrition Act, I hope my concerns are addressed and we can ensure healthy meals for our children in school; and with that, I do support H.R. 3232.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, just as a final thought, children are about 25 percent of our population. They are 100 percent of the future of this Nation, and what they eat really will equate to what our future will be. We must make sure that we do the best job we can for every child in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I have listened intently to the speakers here today. We are all concerned about getting the reauthorization of these programs done correctly, and that is going to take some final work, but all of us, I am sure, are in total agreement of the significance and importance of the programs, and, hopefully, when all is said and done, in 6 months we will be able to do that. For now, it is essential that we pass H.R. 3232.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support for H.R. 3232, which would extend the authorization for the expiring portions of child nutrition legislation for an additional six months. This bill, which was introduced by my colleague Mr. CASTLE, is also cosponsored by

the Ranking Member of the Committee, Mr. MILLER, and Ms. WOOLSEY, Ranking Member on the Education Reform Subcommittee. I thank all of them for their support.

The Child Nutrition programs include the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (or WIC); the Child and Adult Care Food Program; the After School Snack Program; and the Summer Food Service Program.

These invaluable programs—which are responsible for providing nutritious meals to millions of children and adults every day—are due for reauthorization this year. In order to ensure that the Committee has the opportunity to consider the reauthorization process carefully, we are seeking to extend the current authorization an additional six months.

This bill contains one provision of particular importance to our nation's soldiers, sailors and airmen. If this legislation is not approved, the children of Armed Forces members who live in privatized military housing and who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch will lose their school meal subsidies. This would be an insult to these parents who work every day to secure our nation's freedom.

In addition, this legislation contains a provision that allow for-profit child care centers to continue to participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and to continue to provide meals and snacks to centers where at least 25 percent of the children enrolled meet the income eligibility requirements for free and reduced-price lunch.

Parents will always bear primary responsibility for their children's health and nutrition, but this bill provides assistance for those who are having trouble making ends meet. The overall goal of all of the child nutrition programs is to make sure that low-income children and families have access to low-cost meals and snacks that are safe and nutritious. The reauthorization process is a chance for us to look at the current system and see how well it is meeting those goals. We must take into account a number of actors, including efficiency, nutrition, cost-effectiveness, and protecting school revenue. We would like to take this additional six months to be sure that we address all of these issues to the best of our ability.

This bipartisan bill is a simple, straightforward tool to make sure that we are serving the millions of low-income children who depend upon the programs contained in the Child Nutrition and Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Acts. I hope you will join me and my colleagues in voting "yes" on H.R. 3232.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3232, legislation to reauthorize certain school lunch and child nutrition programs.

The federal child nutrition programs continue to be a great success story. The National School Lunch program, enacted in 1946 as a measure of national security, currently serves more than 28 million children each day.

The need for this program has never been greater. With childhood obesity growing at an alarming rate—especially among low income and minority populations—it has never been more critical that our children have access to high quality, nutritious food choices at school.

The legislation we are considering today is only a temporary reauthorization, since this

program expires and we have not completed the heavy lifting necessary for a full five year authorization.

I urge my colleagues who are working on this issue to make a number of significant improvements to these various childhood tuition programs, including:

Increasing the income limit for those children who qualify for a free lunch from 130% of the federal poverty limit to 185% of the federal poverty limit, thereby eliminating the reduced price category of this program;

Providing the USDA commodities for the School Breakfast Program;

Lowering the area eligibility guideline to 40% for the Child Care, at-risk after school and Summer Foodservice programs; and

Increasing the USDA reimbursement rates for child nutrition, consistent with a USDA analysis of the costs to produce a lunch. In most areas of the country, the cost to produce a school lunch is now greater than the reimbursement rate for a free lunch of \$2.14.

A child who is hungry cannot be expected to learn. A few years back, this Congress enacted legislation that promised no child will be left behind. If we are to keep that promise, we must ensure that all children have a healthy and nutritious lunch.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3232, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to reauthorize certain school lunch and child nutrition programs through March 31, 2004."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### RECOGNIZING INDEPENDENT 529 PLAN FOR LAUNCHING A PREPAID TUITION PLAN THAT WILL BENEFIT OUR NATION'S FAMILIES WHO WANT TO SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO PRIVATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 378) recognizing Independent 529 Plan for launching a prepaid tuition plan that will benefit our Nation's families who want to send their children to private colleges and universities, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 378

Whereas postsecondary education is increasingly important to the economic well-being of the United States, and the demand for individuals with postsecondary education continues to grow;

Whereas according to the United States Census Bureau, in 2001 a person with a bachelor's degree earned nearly 90 percent more, on average, than a person with only a high school diploma;

Whereas tuition at independent colleges and universities continues to grow at alarming rates and families need options for financing the high cost of a child's postsecondary education;