

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

SENSE OF HOUSE REGARDING NATIONAL SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 9, 2009

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 210 seeks to express the sense of the House of Representatives that providing breakfast in schools through the National School Breakfast Program has a positive impact on classroom performance. I salute my colleague, Rep. MOORE from Wisconsin, in her efforts to promote the National School Breakfast Program, and to recognize the positive impact that it has on our students. I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution.

It has often been said that the children are our future. As Members of Congress and adults, we must do all that we can to provide their well-being, safety, and excellence in school.

A former U.S. Surgeon General once articulated, "This is expensive stupidity . . . trying to educate children with half starved bodies." While educators, parents and policymakers generally agree that children need breakfast in order to learn, function and grow, the nation still has a ways to go to insure that all needy and at-risk children receive a daily school breakfast. While nearly 100,000 individual schools across the country offer a school lunch, more than 15,000 of them still do not make breakfast available to children who are in need. In some states, only 50–60% of the schools serving students lunch also provide them with a breakfast to start the day.

We must endorse programs aimed to enhance the educational welfare of our children. As President Obama recently stated in his first address to a joint session of Congress, "These education policies will open the doors of opportunity for our children. But it is up to us to ensure they walk through them."

Beginning over twenty years ago, and continuing today, scholarly research has established that the School Breakfast Program significantly improves the cognitive abilities and learning capacities of children. Matched controlled studies, for example, indicate that low-income children who receive school breakfasts do significantly better on a variety of indicators than low-income peers who go without breakfasts. Notably, the better outcomes associated with school breakfast include both educational preparedness (attendance, energy, alertness, memory) and educational outcome measures (math scores, grades, reading ability).

When a child misses even one meal, let alone experiences chronic food shortages, impairments occur whether they are lethargy and inattention, tiredness and distraction, or actual physical symptoms such as stomachaches and headaches. The research from the United States Department of Agriculture shows that feeding children breakfast in school helps to

prevent these adverse outcomes. Children getting breakfast at school also are sick less often, have fewer problems associated with hunger, such as dizziness, stomachaches and ear aches, and do significantly better than their peers who do not get a school breakfast in terms of cooperation, discipline and inter-personal behaviors.

Mr. Speaker, our failure to fully utilize the School Breakfast Program has substantial costs, costs that greatly reduce the return on educational investment in communities and states across the nation. Moreover, longer-term costs also are borne by young children who arrive at school unable to fully participate in the educational process due to lack of adequate nutrition.

We, as Members of Congress, cannot allow for a matter such as child hunger, which we as Congress can help eradicate, to act as an impediment to the education of our children. President Obama articulated very fittingly, that "in a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity—it is a pre-requisite."

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 210, expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that providing breakfast in schools through the National School Breakfast Program has a positive impact on classroom performance, because the School Breakfast Program represents a key way to protect these children and to get a better return on educational investments as well.

FEDERAL LAND ASSISTANCE, MANAGEMENT, AND ENHANCEMENT (FLAME) ACT

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 10, 2009

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act, or the FLAME Act.

Last year, our country experienced the devastating effects of catastrophic, emergency wildland fires in California. For the past several years, we have witnessed tragic fire seasons that have put American lives and our treasured public lands in harm's way. Fire seasons are getting longer and more intense due to climate change, drought, and other factors.

As a result, federal fire suppression spending has increased substantially over the past 10 years and projections appear to indicate that this trend will continue into the foreseeable future.

The dramatic rise in these costs is eroding other non-fire programs and impacting the core mission of the Federal land management agencies. In the case of the Forest Service, for example, wildland fire suppression activities now account for approximately 48 percent

of its budget. This creates a sad trend: our Forest Service is turning into the Fire Service.

Furthermore, both the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior have had to "Rob Peter to Pay Paul" by borrowing funds from other agency accounts to cover the escalating costs of wildland fire suppression. In 2007, for example, the Forest Service spent \$741 million more than was budgeted for wildland fire suppression, and the Department of the Interior spent \$249 million more than was budgeted for wildland fire suppression. And in the case of the Forest Service, the costs of catastrophic, emergency wildland fire suppression activities account for the vast majority of suppression expenditures, as two percent of fires account for 80 percent of costs.

Madam Speaker, it is clear that something needs to be done to resolve this problem. That is why today I am reintroducing the FLAME Act.

The FLAME Act establishes a federal FLAME fund for catastrophic, emergency wildland fire suppression activities. The Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior may declare catastrophic, emergency wildland fire suppression activities eligible for the FLAME fund by issuing a Suppression Emergency Declaration. The declaration will evaluate the size, severity, and threat of the individual wildland fire incident.

The FLAME Act continues our stewardship of all lands by making funds available for catastrophic, emergency wildland fire suppression activities on State and private land consistent with existing agreements. Funds will also be available for catastrophic, emergency wildland fire suppression on Indian lands.

The FLAME Act also requires that the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior submit a long-overdue report to Congress containing a cohesive wildland fire management strategy. This report will improve efforts to prevent fires on our public lands, by addressing critical fire prevention issues such as indentifying a system for assessing the level of fire risk to communities, and indentifying a system to ensure that the highest priority fuels reduction projects are being funded first.

Last Congress, we worked to ensure House-passage of the FLAME Act. The bill drew support from the five former living Chiefs of the Forest Service, over 40 different organizations, 56 Members of Congress, and the Speaker of the House. However, the Senate did not act upon the measure. This Congress, I am pleased that Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman JEFF BINGAMAN and Ranking Member LISA MURKOWSKI will be introducing the Senate companion measure to the FLAME Act. I look forward to working with our colleagues in the other body to ensure enactment of this important legislation in the 111th Congress.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased that President Obama has indicated that he is supportive of working together on this issue. I thank him for his leadership on this issue by addressing it in his Fiscal Year 2010 budget.

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