

Child Nutrition Background

National Farm to School Network

Every four or five years, the federal Child Nutrition bills, including the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 and the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act of 1946, are up for review during the reauthorization process. These two bills, as well as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), will expire on September 30, 2009. While the National School Breakfast, National School Lunch Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program are permanently authorized, the reauthorization process allows for a reconsideration of all programs including the following:

- * National School Lunch Program
- * School Breakfast Program
- * Child and Adult Care Food Program
- * Summer Food Service Program
- * WIC, and including, WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
- * Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
- * Special Milk Program

During this review period, there is an opportunity on Capitol Hill to evaluate and amend the federal Child Nutrition Programs, and this process has the potential to involve all of those who are concerned with the health of our nation's children. Amending the Child Nutrition Acts can have powerful effects on federal meal programs and the people they serve, as can be seen in some of the historical highlights listed below.

- 1946 The National School Lunch Act (NSLA) was signed by President Harry Truman.
- 1966 Serving 3 billion meals to 19 million children. The Child Nutrition Act (CNA) passed. This created a two-year pilot project School Breakfast Program, established a food service equipment assistance program, and increased funds for meals served to needy students.
- 1970 Free and reduced price meals eligibility standards established by legislation championed by Senators Dole and McGovern.
- 1972 The National Soft Drink Association introduces an amendment eliminating the restrictions on competitive foods. Vending machines entered schools.
- 1973 Jean Mayer, Nixon's nutrition adviser, warns the President of a threatening national epidemic of obesity.
- 1978 Last greatest movement for CNR was in 1978, with the Carter Administration, and multiple gains with increased eligibility, reduced meal prices, and increased breakfast reimbursements.
- 1981 Overall cut of 28% affected multiple child nutrition programs. Approximately 2 million children are dropped from the NSLP. The 10 million dollar Food Service Equipment Program was eliminated. Ketchup and pickle relish are declared vegetables.
- 1994 Schools require lunches to conform to the Dietary Guidelines by 1996. USDA established Team Nutrition and launched the Healthy School Meals Initiative to support improvements in school lunch and increased nutrition education for children.
- 1996 Child nutrition block grants that would have cut funding, national eligibility, and nutrition standards were defeated by the Clinton administration, Senator Lugar, and the anti-hunger and public health communities.
- 1998 The 1998 CN Reauthorization created a new entitlement: funding for "after school lunch snack."
- 2002 First regional Farm to Cafeteria conference organized at Cornell University, with assistance from the University of New Hampshire.

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CURRENT HAPPENINGS

Some of the major players in shaping the Child Nutrition Reauthorization are:

- **The School Nutrition Association (SNA)** is a national, nonprofit organization representing more than 55,000 food service and other related professionals. The SNA is a key advocate on child nutrition issues. www.schoolnutrition.org
- **The National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA)** advocates national policies and programs to promote healthy eating and physical activity. Members of its steering committee include: the American Dietetic Association, the American Heart Association, the American Public Health Association, and the Center for Science in the Public Interest. www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/nana.html
- **Child Nutrition Forum (CNF)** has a steering committee of about forty national groups from the religious community, the food and farming world, civil rights and children's rights organizations, and major education groups. The major purpose of the CNF is to influence priorities around the Child Nutrition Reauthorization. The Community Food Security Coalition is on the steering committee. (members include SNA, FRAC and the CFSC)
- **Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)** is a national non-profit organization conducting research on issues relating to hunger and poverty and works towards improved public policies to reduce hunger and under nutrition. FRAC is a key player on Child Nutrition issues. www.frac.org
- **The Society for Nutrition Education (SNE)** has a Sustainable Food Systems Division and it promotes food systems that are environmentally sound, socially just, economically viable, and that produce quality food. SNE is a strong voice for nutrition education interests within the Child Nutrition Reauthorization. www.sne.org

Congressional Committees involved with the Child Nutrition Reauthorization are:

House Education and Labor Committee

Senate Agriculture Committee

For a listing of committee members go to:

http://www.frac.org/Legislative/action_center/index.html

With the authorization of the National Farm to School Program in 2004, and the tremendous growth and interest in farm to school programs, the timing is excellent to voice ideas and articulate priorities that address the inclusion of locally and regionally grown foods in national meal programs. For more information on the priorities of the Community Food Security Coalition and the National Farm to School Network, please contact Marion Kalb at marion@foodsecurity.org, or 505-474-5782.

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www.farmtoschool.org