

RECIPIENT CONCERNS

Finally, and most important, the nutrition block grant proposal could result in an increase in hunger in America. Fifty-two percent of food stamp recipients are children. Approximately \$9 of every \$10 spent for food stamp benefits—89 percent—are provided to households with children, elderly, or disabled people. Families with children receive 82 percent of food stamp benefits. Thirteen million children receive food stamps in an average month.

If States choose to handle the reduced funding levels by restricting eligibility to nutrition programs, 6 million food stamp recipients, most of them children, will no longer be eligible for nutrition benefits in fiscal year 1996. I don't believe that the American people intend for welfare reform to increase hunger among our children.

All welfare reform proposals should be analyzed on the basis of how well they will support and encourage people to attain self-sufficiency, and not simply on how much money they save. They must be analyzed on how they will affect our children, who are our future. Simply reducing funding, and eliminating the entitlement status of our nutrition programs, does not result in effective welfare reform. We all want welfare reform, but we must be concerned not just with the short-term impact, the present impact, but also with the future impact. I urge my colleagues to move carefully and thoughtfully on welfare reform.

Mr. Speaker, as long as we have the human element involved, there will be fraud and abuse; our challenge is to minimize it. But, my friends, a block grant is not going to cure this. Let us not deceive ourselves on this, it might even make it worse, for there will be no uniformity. So, again, I urge my colleagues to move carefully and thoughtfully to achieve the end result. We cannot, we must not, gamble with such a precious commodity as our children.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. BLILEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. BLILEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

IN DEFENSE OF NUTRITION PROGRAMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. MILLER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, in a rush to cut governmental spending, the Republicans seem intent not to look at whether or not programs are effective, whether or not programs have been successful, but simply to cut and to block-grant those programs so that they can realize the savings that they want to pay for the other things that they wish to do, whether it is an increase in the defense spending or to provide tax cuts to the very wealthy of this country.

Unfortunately, the programs caught up in that whirlwind happen to be the nutrition programs. These are among

some of the most successful programs in the history of this Government and the history of this Nation. These are the programs that have lifted our elderly out of desperate situations when they did not have enough income to feed themselves, have dramatically reduced the incidence of low-birth-weight and very-low-birth-weight children to pregnant women, to families, to prevent them from suffering the setback and the disappointment and the heart-break of birth defects of a critically ill child at the moment of birth, and at the same time to alleviate the taxpayers and others of the cost of the thousands of dollars a day it takes to bring a very-low-birth-weight child up to normal weight and the efforts so that they can take that child home.

These are the programs that have allowed our senior citizens to live in their own home. One of the leading causes of people being put into nursing homes is that they can no longer cook for themselves. So we used a program called Meals on Wheels. I have delivered the meals, my wife has delivered the meals, our children have delivered the meals to the elderly in our community. That is the reason they can live in a surrounding that they are comfortable with. They can no longer cook, but we can deliver a nutritious meal to those individuals.

What happens when we do that? We reduce the nursing home cost, the health care cost, and the whole Nation benefits, and those people get to live in a surrounding they are comfortable with.

These are the programs that have allowed people to go into their homes and to cook for those individuals so that they could stay in those surroundings.

These are the programs that when people find themselves unemployed, through no fault of their own, they went to work every day, they worked in the steel mills, in the automobile factories, in the insurance companies, at IBM or Xerox, and all of a sudden they had no family income, because of restructuring or downsizing or layoffs or unemployment, whatever the words are that you want to use.

But they had to feed their families. So they were entitled to go over, and to get food stamps to give them help while they were unemployed. Their children might be eligible for a school lunch because they have no family income.

Now we say we are going to cut those programs across the board? We are going to cut those programs across the board for Americans that went to work every day. And they worked hard. They just happened to be so unfortunate that their job was yanked away from underneath them.

I do not think that is the message that America wants to send to its families, but that is what these nutrition programs are about. They are about the prevention of birth defects. They are about letting families have an oppor-

tunity to have healthy babies. They are about our elderly living out the twilight of their life with dignity, and the security of their own surroundings, and not bankrupting their children or themselves because they have to go to a nursing home because there is no one to take care of them in the city in which they now live.

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That is what these programs are about. And they are about making sure that there is in fact a safety net for working Americans so that when hard times come they can get some help until they can get the next job.

Twenty percent of the families receiving Food Stamps are working families in this Nation. The go to work every day. They have not lost their job, but they do not make enough to be above the poverty line.

Some of those families are in the U.S. military. They are serving this country. But they do not make enough, so that they are eligible for Food Stamps, and to make ends meet for those military families they go down and they participate in the Food Stamp Program. That may be a shame that that is the situation with the military families in this country but it is a fact. In fact, if we look at these nutrition programs, they are an indictment of this country, for our inability to provide jobs to create wages so people can feed themselves, so that people that find themselves in tough economic straits can get a bridge out, to get temporarily help. But we do not.

We see homeless people on our streets. In 1980 the Reagan administration said it was an emergency and temporary. They said they were there because they wanted to be. And in 1990 they were counted in the census as a permanent part of the American landscape.

That is unacceptable and, the nutrition programs stand between millions of Americans and that fate. And that should be block granted.

Mr. Speaker, the question I put to you today is: Where is the mandate? Who is mandating the repeal and block granting of the Federal nutrition programs?

No one has contacted my office to support a nutrition block grant, and hundreds have written opposing it. Exactly who is asking for the demolition of these programs that have proven so successful in saving the taxpayers' money, preparing our kids to support themselves when they get older, and increasing the health of our seniors?

The Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee had to cancel a hearing this morning on the nutrition block grant because they couldn't get a Republican Governor to testify in support of it. The Governors themselves have serious concerns about the negative impact the block grant will have on our citizens and our country.

Speaker GINGRICH is mandating this block grant to pay for his tax cut for the rich. In order to save a few billion dollars to pay for