children were healthy, lucky me, and the Members know I was assertive, eventually, I worked my way out of poverty. But it would have been almost impossible without the help of the Federal Government; and, believe me, I think that others should have the same opportunities that I did.

I know that we need to make education and training count as work activity for welfare recipients so mothers will have access to educational opportunities and job training to give them the skills they need so that they can get jobs that pay a livable wage, so that they can actually take care of their families. I know that quality child care, child care that actually includes infant and weekend and evening work, helps parents keep their jobs so that they can become self-sufficient and that these programs are essential to any welfare plan to give support to families in need.

Madam Speaker, as Congress continues to debate welfare reauthorization, we have to remember that the goal of welfare is to move women and their families from welfare to self-sufficiency, not from welfare to poverty as it is now. Therefore, we in this body must do a lot more to make this a true bipartisan bill so that families can get the real help that they need. In the meantime, I urge my colleagues to join me in continuing under S. 2231 what is going on now, so that we can improve the safety net for families in need.

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

Madam Speaker, the very first words in the TANF program are: ''The purpose of this part is to increase the flexibility of the States . . . '' The law then highlights several purposes such as helping needy families and promoting work.

My concern is that the legislation that passed this body takes a major step backwards in our stated goal of giving State flexibility.

The House bill reduces State flexibility on providing education and training by removing it from a core work activity. This is an issue for the States to decide, but, no, in our legislation we make it a Federal issue.

The House bill reduces States' flexibility in addressing the individual needs of welfare recipients by doubling the number of required work hours for mothers with children under the age of 6 required in the legislation that passed this body. This should be up to the States to make those judgments. That is what State flexibility is about.

The House bill reduces the flexibility of States to design programs that focus on moving people from welfare to work by increasing work participation rates without providing an employment credit for those individuals who leave welfare for a wage-paying job. Once again, the States should be able to tailor their own programs to meet their needs. That was the commitment we made in 1996.

And the House bill reduces State flexibility by imposing full sanctions, not giving States the opportunity to have their own sanctions system, once again taking away flexibility from the States. That is not what we should be doing.

The 1996 welfare reform worked because we trusted our States, we gave them the tools, and they developed programs that made sense to get people off of welfare and to get people employed. That is what we need to do again in the next chapter of welfare reform by not only empowering our States but making it easier for them to get families out of poverty.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation so that we can continue the current program, but I also urge my colleagues, particularly on the other side of the aisle, to sit down with us and let us work out a sensible bipartisan bill that really will continue the commitment we made in 1996 to our families of America and to our States, giving the States the resources and the flexibility to get the job done.

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

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

The comment was made that somehow we are not funding as much or funding is less. Not only is this not accurate, the exact opposite in fact is the truth. In terms of case welfare, child care funds available per person on welfare, there is twice as much funding available today as there was in 1996 because the rolls have been cut in half and yet the funding has remained constant.

For example, in 1996 the average amount of money available per welfare family was about $7,000. Today, the average amount available for each family is $16,000, from $7,000 to $16,000, that is available.

Madam Speaker, again, as I have said during prior extension debates, it is my sincere hope that this will be the final extension needed and that the next 3 months will result in a final agreement that will help millions more families achieve independence and a brighter future. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. BOEHNER. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 2231, but I am discouraged that we find ourselves needing to pass this legislation.

The bill before us today will extend the Federal welfare law, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, or TANF, for another 3 months. This is the sixth time we have come to the floor to extend this program since its authorization expired in September 2002.

The 1996 welfare reform law is one of the most successful social policy initiatives in recent memory. However, we know there is more work to be done. A majority of TANF recipients—approximately 60 percent—still are not working for benefits.

To put even more Americans on the path to self-sufficiency and independence, the House passed H.R. 4 in February 2003. H.R. 4 strengthens current work requirements by asking welfare recipients to engage in work-related activities for 40 hours a week—16 of which could be in education, job training, or other constructive activities as defined by States.

The House-passed bill would ensure that no needy family would fall through the cracks. H.R. 4 creates a policy of universal engagement so that all families receiving welfare benefits must be in work or other activities leading to self-sufficiency. The House reauthorization measure also gradually increases to 70 percent the work participation rate required by States.

Moreover, the House reauthorization bill makes significant improvements to the Child Care and Development Block Grant. It adds $1 billion in discretionary funding to the program over 5 years and requires States to devote more money to improving child care quality. These provisions will ensure that low-income parents have access to safe, quality child care as they move into work.

This week the other body is considering full welfare reauthorization. I am encouraged that the other body may soon pass its welfare reauthorization bill, and hope we will be able to resolve our differences quickly in a conference committee.

The millions of Americans still seeking to move off of the welfare rolls deserve no less. Those continuing to struggle to attain self-sufficiency need the assistance that H.R. 4 would provide.

While I hope this will be the last extension of current law we must pass, I urge my colleagues to support the bill before us today.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 2231.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SCHOOL LUNCH AND CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. CASTLE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 2241) to reauthorize certain school lunch and child nutrition programs through June 30, 2004.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 2241

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

SECTION 1. 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 striking ''March 31, 2004'' and inserting ''June 30, 2004''.

SEC. 2. 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 ''March 31, 2004'' and inserting ''June 30, 2004''.

SEC. 3. 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 ''April 1, 2004'' and inserting ''July 1, 2004''.

SEC. 4. 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 ''March 31, 2004'' and inserting ''June 30, 2004''.

SEC. 5. SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 13(q) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1761(q)) is amended by striking ''March 31, 2004'' and inserting ''June 30, 2004''.

(b) PILOT PROJECTS.—Section 18(f)(2) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1769(f)(2)) is amended by striking ''March 31, 2004'' and inserting ''June 30, 2004''.

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

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CASTLE. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on S. 2241.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise to support bipartisan legislation that extends certain child nutrition provisions, that are set to expire at the end of this month, through June 30, 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.

The National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, WIC, the Child and Adult Care Food, After School Snack, and Summer Food Service Programs, together make up a network of Federal child nutrition programs that are a critical part of our Nation's effort to ensure that needy children in America do not go hungry.

One week ago, the House passed H.R. 3873, the Child Nutrition Improvement and Integrity Act, with overwhelming bipartisan support. H.R. 3873 significantly improves Federal child nutrition programs by increasing program access for eligible children, enhancing program integrity, and emphasizing the importance of nutrition education, balanced diets, and physical activity to reduce the incidence of childhood obesity.

I urge the other body to pass companion legislation to reauthorize child nutrition programs soon so that children and their families can take advantage of these and other improvements to current law contained in H.R. 3873.

The extensions included in today's legislation are a temporary measure to assure the continuation of current law until final legislation is signed into law. S. 2241 will 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 would also 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, continue special pilot programs to reduce paperwork and thereby increase the number of disadvantaged children who receive free meals and snacks during the summer months.

Madam Speaker, there are just a few reasons why S. 2241 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 Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. I conclude by asking that my fellow colleagues to please join me in support of S. 2241.

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 my colleagues in urging passage of S. 2241 to extend the authority for important child nutrition programs. I was pleased to stand on this floor last week with the gentleman from Ohio (Chairman BOEHNER) and the gentleman from Delaware (Chairman CASTLE), the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER), ranking member, and our entire committee to pass H.R. 3873, the Child Nutrition Improvement and Integrity Act, the House bill which both authorizes and makes some important improvements to the Federal child nutrition program.

H.R. 3873 improves accuracy in the school meals program without dropping eligible children. It makes it easier for eligible students to get free and reduced meals by making the application process easier.

H.R. 3873 makes homeless and migrant youth and children whose families receive food stamps automatically eligible for free meals. It allows youth up to age 18 to participate in meals programs if they are living in domestic violence or homeless shelters. It increases startup and expansion grants for the School Breakfast Program and includes a study of the best ways to overcome common barriers to offering breakfasts at all schools for all students.

H.R. 3873 helps students make better food choices and fight obesity with team nutrition which provides nutrition education to students and training and support to improve the nutrition of food sold in schools. It requires school districts to develop a local wellness policy which addresses both what students eat at school and the role that physical activity plays in good health. It creates greater opportunities for schools.

It includes fresh and dried fruits and fresh vegetables in school meals, gets our very youngest children off to a healthy start with the new WIC Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program that will study the benefits of including fruit and vegetables in the WIC food package.

When we passed H.R. 3873 last week, Mr. Speaker, we proved that child nutrition truly is a bipartisan priority here in the House of Representatives. I urge my colleagues in the other body to make it a priority as well so that we can get child nutrition reauthorization and the improvements we need into law.

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

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

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

The primary goal of all of the Federal child nutrition programs is to increase opportunities for low-income infants and children so that they will eat nutritious food. Anytime the economy takes a turn for the worse, as it has done for a while now, we can see it first in the number of low-income children who do not have enough to eat.

□ 1400

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.

WIC and the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs and the Child and Adult Care Food Program are our very best weapons in the fight against childhood hunger. These programs ensure that 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.

Another way to get more food to hungry kids, particularly kids in working poor families, would be to pass the bill of the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS), of which I am a cosponsor, to phase out the reduced price category in school lunch and breakfast.

The 40 cents fee for reduced school price lunch is a major barrier for children of the working poor. While 40 cents may not seem like much money to us, if your income is between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty line and you have more than one child, it is often more than you can afford to spend.

Eliminating the reduced price category would save schools immeasurable time and money, because it would reduce their paperwork burdens and greatly simplify the eligibility program in the process.

Eliminating reduced prices works for schools, it works for hungry kids, and it should be something we start immediately.

Another change for the better would be to improve the nutrition quality of all of the food sold in our schools. Today, one out of every six children is overweight; and childhood obesity raises special concerns. It places children at high risk for disease and conditions previously only associated with adults. Nearly two-thirds of obese 5- to 10-year-olds have at least one additional risk factor for cardiovascular disease. There has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of children with Type II diabetes, the form of the disease directly linked to overweight adults.

In addition, childhood obesity is a strong predictor of adult obesity. A recent study found that 77 percent of children with a body mass index greater than the 95th percentile remained obese as adults.

A study just released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that, if current trends continue, obesity will become the leading cause of preventible death by next year; not in the future, next year.

Over-consumption of low nutrition soft drinks and snacks plays a key role in childhood obesity. Yet 43 percent of elementary schools, 74 percent of middle schools, and 98 percent of high schools have vending machines, school stores or snack bars that sell soft drinks, candy, salty snacks and baked goods that are at high risk and high in fat, while, at the same time, not providing healthy snacks as a balance.

We need a good, scientifically-based study on what is a healthy school environment; and then we need to help schools create that environment for their students. The child nutrition bill that we passed last week takes some good first steps with the local wellness policy and team nutrition, but we need to be doing much, much more.

In addition to that, we should be trying to help all children make healthy eating choices. I certainly do not mean that we or should anyone else should become food policemen or policewomen, but schools can be offered incentives to make healthy foods available, and children can be educated to choose those healthy foods.

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, this is all pretty simple. We are passing this Senate bill to extend these programs from the end of March, which is tomorrow, until June 30. Hopefully, in that time the other body will take up the full reauthorization of these various nutrition programs.

I think the gentlewoman from California stated it correctly in terms of the benefit of those programs. It is my hope, frankly, that they use our bill as the base bill for what they are going to do. I think we are pretty much in unanimous consent in this House that what is in there makes a lot of sense. That is the reason we need to pass this today.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 2241, which extends the authorization for the expiring portions of federal child nutrition programs for an additional three months.

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. I am pleased to note that the House acted decisively last week to approve comprehensive reauthorization legislation, showing overwhelming support for a bill that includes positive reforms to improve program integrity and ensure services for eligible children. Unfortunately we have not had the opportunity to complete the reauthorization process with our friends on the other side of the Capitol, and for that reason, we are here today seeking to extend the current authorization an additional three 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 allows 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 Child Nutrition Improvement & Integrity Act approved by the House last week includes important steps to ensure effective and efficient use of federal resources dedicated to child nutrition programs. The bipartisan bill, authored by Representative MIKE CASTLE (R–DE), would significantly enhance integrity in how the child nutrition programs are administered, and would ensure vulnerable children and families have improved access to nutritional services. I am eager to move forward with the Child Nutrition Improvement & Integrity Act, and I believe the extension before us will allow the Congress to complete a thorough and comprehensive reauthorization process that includes the positive reforms approved by the House last week.

This bipartisan bill is a simple, straightforward tool to make sure 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. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the bill before us today and I encourage the House to act once again in a bipartisan show of support for federal child nutrition programs by voting "yes" on S. 2241.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WHITFIELD). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 2241.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on S. 2231.

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

There was no objection.

REIMBURSING MEMBERS OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES FOR CERTAIN TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 2057) to require the Secretary of Defense to reimburse members of the United States Armed Forces for certain transportation expenses incurred by the members in connection with leave under the Central Command Rest and Recuperation Leave Program before the program was expanded to include domestic travel.