

**An Open Letter to the United States Congress:
Reform the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program by including Taxpayer Protections!**

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of the millions of Americans represented by the undersigned organizations, we write to urge support for several common sense taxpayer protections to the nutrition programs included in the Farm Bill, particularly the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). It's impossible to achieve significant savings in the bill without considering reforms to nutrition programs, as they account for 80% of total spending under the Farm Bill.

When Congress takes up the food and farm legislation later this year, it should ensure that basic taxpayer protections are applied to nutrition programs. The following reforms would limit spending, while continuing to provide a basic social safety net for the most vulnerable of Americans.

- **Use block grants:** Replacing the annual appropriation with a block grant would give states an incentive to control costs. This is an improvement over current policy, in which states have an incentive to procure as many federal dollars as possible. Last session, Rep. Huelskamp introduced a bill (H.R. 6567) that proposed to merge the six food welfare programs in the Farm Bill into a single block grant.
- **Apply income and asset tests to categorically eligible households:** A major driver of the growth in food stamp spending is state-based efforts to increase benefits and expand eligibility. An increasing number of recipients are automatically, or “categorically,” eligible for benefits based on their participation in other programs. According to the Congressional Budget Office, adding income and asset tests to categorical eligibility requirements would trim average annual outlays by \$12 billion over 10 years.
- **Roll back spending on Title IV to FY2008 levels:** Federal outlays for nutrition programs in 2008 were \$37.6 billion; in 2013, they will total \$82.0 billion. Returning spending to FY2008 levels would strike a balance between fiscal responsibility and providing a reasonable social safety net.
- **Separate Title IV from the rest of the Bill:** Nutrition assistance is unrelated to the agricultural subsidies contained in the rest of the bill and it deserves its own treatment in separate legislation. Washington needs to stop rolling massive programs together in order to secure votes and shield programs from much-needed reform. Last session, Sen. Ron Johnson made a motion to send the bill back to the Agriculture Committee with instructions to strike Title IV—the title dealing with food stamps (SNAP) and other nutrition programs. We urge you to take this important step this year.

Although there are many other areas in the Farm Bill that are ripe for improvement, lawmakers should consider a combination of the aforementioned reforms to nutrition programs.

Sincerely,

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