

National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity

Update USDA's School Nutrition Standards

Cosponsor the “**Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act,**” to be introduced by Senators Harkin, Specter, and Murkowski and Representatives Woolsey and Shays, to provide children with nutritious food and beverage choices at schools, model healthy choices, reinforce nutrition education, and support parents' ability to feed their children a healthy diet.

Why Do School Nutrition Standards Need to Be Updated?

While national nutrition standards for the school lunch and breakfast programs are updated periodically in accordance with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, nutrition standards for foods sold outside of school meals are not. Because these standards are over 30 years old, they are out of sync with current science and with current concerns about children's diets and health. As a result, while children receive sound nutrition from federally-reimbursed school meals, foods such as soft drinks, candy, and fried snack foods are readily available at school, undermining child health and wasting taxpayer dollars invested in the federal school meal programs.

The Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act:

- Calls on the U.S. Department of Agriculture to update the definition of “Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value” to ensure that it conforms with current nutrition science and addresses pressing threats to child health and nutrition at school.
- Applies the new definition to cover all foods sold in schools outside of federally reimbursed school meals, throughout the school grounds and the school day.

USDA's current nutrition standards result in arbitrary limits on the sale of foods in school cafeterias.

Allowed:

Fruitades (*with little juice*)
French fries
Ice cream
Candy bars
Cookies
Chips
Snack cakes
Doughnuts

Not Allowed:

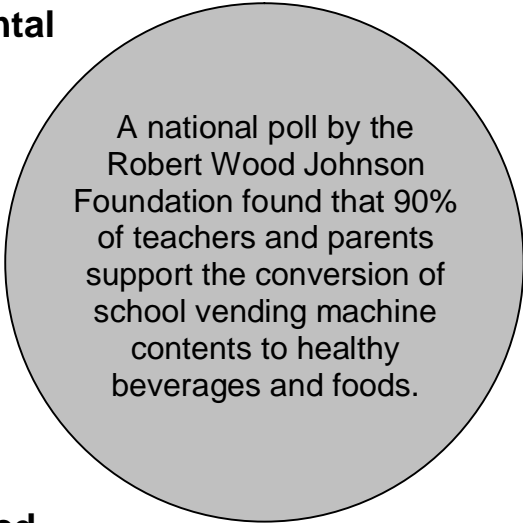
Seltzer water
Caramel corn
Popsicles (*without fruit/fruit juice*)
Jelly beans
Chewing gum
Lollipops
Cotton candy
Breath mints

USDA's School Nutrition Standards Are Out of Date

Over the past several decades, over-consumption of calories, saturated fat, trans fat, added sugars, and sodium have increasingly become problems in children's diets. Those constituents are not addressed by USDA's school nutrition standards. Excessive consumption of those constituents contributes to obesity, heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, and tooth decay.

School Nutrition Standards Should Support Parental Efforts to Feed Children a Healthy Diet

Parents entrust their children to schools during the school day, where children spend many of their waking hours and many children eat a substantial portion of their meals/snacks. Without their parents' knowledge, some children spend their lunch money on low-nutrition foods from a la carte and vending machines, rather than on balanced school meals.



A national poll by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that 90% of teachers and parents support the conversion of school vending machine contents to healthy beverages and foods.

Updated Standards Would Ensure That Federal Dollars Spent on School Meal Programs Are Not Undermined and That Nutrition Goals Are Achieved

Since the Truman administration, foods sold and served through school meals have been regulated at the federal level. Congress and USDA set detailed requirements for the foods provided by the school meal programs. The federal government invests significant resources in the school meal programs (\$9.4 billion in FY 2004 for school lunch and breakfast) and has strong nutrition standards for those meals. Selling low-nutrition foods in schools undermines that investment.

The sale of nutrition-poor foods in schools ultimately contributes to costly treatment of obesity- and diet-related diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke, and osteoporosis (such diseases have their roots in childhood). Taxpayers bear much of the costs through the Medicaid and Medicare programs and federal employee health insurance. U.S. healthcare costs due to obesity are \$94 billion a year, half of which (\$47 billion) is paid through Medicare and Medicaid.

The National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA) encourages you to cosponsor the "Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act" to address childhood obesity and support parents' ability to feed their children a healthy diet. If you have questions regarding this bill, contact either Jennifer Weber at the American Dietetic Association at 202.775.8277 or <jweber@eatright.org>; Jessica Donze Black at the American Heart Association at 202.785.7907 or <jessica.black@heart.org>; or Joy Johanson at the Center for Science in the Public Interest at 202.777.8351 or <jjohanson@cspinet.org>.