

2413 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0703
(202) 225-3661

59 ELM STREET
SECOND FLOOR
NEW HAVEN, CT 06510
(203) 562-3718

DURHAM/MIDDLEFIELD/MIDDLETOWN
(860) 344-1159

WEBSITE: [HTTP://DELAURO.HOUSE.GOV](http://DELAURO.HOUSE.GOV)



UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ROSA L. DELAURO
3RD DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

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AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT,
FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION,
AND RELATED AGENCIES

January 27, 2014

Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I commend your leadership in working with Congress to help ensure sufficient funds in FY 2014 to continue to meet the nutritional needs of all eligible low-income mothers, infants, and children who participate in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Unfortunately, I am deeply concerned with language in the Explanatory Statement accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY2014 that suggests the WIC supplemental food packages be amended to include all varieties of fresh vegetables, including the currently excluded white potato. I urge you to reject this proposed change.

Fresh white potatoes are not currently included in supplemental food packages because the research overwhelmingly shows that white potatoes are not lacking in the diets of low-income women and children. Further, while white potatoes can make an important nutritional contribution in the diet, the Institute of Medicine, when providing recommendations to USDA in the development of these food packages, conducted a thorough review of available evidence and found white potatoes to be consumed in sufficient quantity by the eligible WIC population, consistent with dietary recommendations. The Institute of Medicine further found other fruit and vegetable consumption to be lacking in the diets of WIC participants.

Ensuring the science-based integrity of the WIC program to address key nutrient deficiencies of participants should be of highest priority. In the 38 years in which WIC has been successful in improving birth outcomes and nutrition, Congress has never acted to specify the content of the WIC food package. In fact, over time, Congress has on several occasions rejected such efforts on a bipartisan basis. USDA's current science-based practice for determining what foods should be offered by WIC is sound and should not be altered. Changing the allowable food package based on politics would set a dangerous precedent and undermine the integrity of the science-based process that has kept the WIC program strong for decades.

I value the evidence-based process USDA and IOM undertook to determine the content of the WIC food package to ensure science, not politics, serve as the foundation for which foods are offered to best supplement the nutritional needs of low-income Americans. The next WIC food package review and IOM report will be undertaken within a few years. I urge USDA, and will support you in doing so, to maintain the scientific integrity of the program by adhering to the

science-based process used to determine the WIC food package and to reject this change. Doing so will follow decades of precedent and science ensuring that eligible low-income mothers and young children throughout the country can count on access the nutritious food they need. Thank you for your leadership in keeping WIC strong and successful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rosa DeLauro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rosa" and last name "DeLauro" clearly legible.

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress