

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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By: Lucio
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010*, issued by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services, calls for greater consumption of fruits and vegetables, but the high cost of fresh produce discourages participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) from following this recommendation.

Fruits and vegetables are associated with reduced risk of many chronic diseases and provide a number of nutrients that are under-consumed in the United States, including vitamins A, C, and K, as well as potassium, fiber, and magnesium. Moreover, they are relatively low in calories. The USDA accordingly recommends that Americans fill half their plates with these foods at every meal or snack, which means most Americans should double their current consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Unfortunately, the inflation-adjusted cost of fresh fruits and vegetables rose nearly 40 percent over a 15-year period, while the cost of nutrient-poor, high-calorie "junk" foods has actually declined in recent years. For those with limited means, the need to stretch their dollars may override the desire to make healthy food choices.

The difficult economic climate has increased the number of Americans receiving SNAP benefits, formerly known as food stamps. As of January 2011, 43 million people, or one in seven Americans, were participating in SNAP, and about half of them were children.

Nearly one-third of all children and adolescents in the United States are overweight or obese, and these youngsters are increasingly developing "adult" diseases, such as type 2 diabetes and hypertension; furthermore, they are at increased risk for heart disease, stroke, certain types of cancer, and other serious chronic conditions. Medical expenses for obese children are approximately three times higher than for other children, and childhood obesity is estimated to cost the nation \$14 billion in direct health expenses.

In order to reduce the incidence of obesity-related diseases and stem rising health care costs, it is crucial that all Americans have access to foods that make up a healthy diet, but SNAP benefits are currently insufficient to allow participants to make fruits and vegetables the primary component of their meals.

RESOLVED

That the 82nd Legislature of the State of Texas hereby respectfully urge the United States Congress to ensure that benefits provided by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program are adequate for the purchase of a healthy diet.

That the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to the president of the Senate and speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, to the secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture, and to all the members of the Texas delegation to Congress with the request that this resolution be entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.