

This is an important year for child nutrition, with implications for families and schools nationwide. The Child Nutrition Act is up for reauthorization (after a one-year extension last year), and is moving through the legislative process. The House has crafted a bill that will significantly increase access to child nutrition programs, improve the quality of meals and raise the reimbursement rate in schools for the first increase in over 30 years.

Late last year I introduced the Children's Fruit and Vegetable Act with the goal of increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables in school breakfasts and lunches. The legislation includes strategies to improve health and limit obesity among America's schoolchildren, and it looks as though many of the provisions in my bill will be wrapped into the Child Nutrition Reauthorization.

A key component of my bill is the use of salad bars in schools. Studies offer conclusive evidence that the use of salad bars in schools results in increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, which schoolchildren desperately need to eat more of. Studies also show that food waste is extremely low when children are allowed to choose the types of fruits and vegetables they want to eat.

The Recovery Act provided some funds to update cafeteria infrastructure, but the requests overwhelmed the supply of money. That clearly showed that cafeterias want to offer healthier foods, but lack the resources to do so. Schools need funds to buy these simple salad bars that will allow them to offer children healthier food.

I also believe that we must support more farm-to-cafeteria programs, which offer healthy foods and also serve to educate children. If the foods and learning opportunities are offered, we've seen children eagerly take advantage of them, both locally on the Central Coast and across the country.

Additionally, as the vice-chairman for the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, I'm pleased to work with Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro to include a reserve fund of \$1 billion to support the pending reauthorization of our child nutrition programs. After all, millions of American families rely on these crucial programs, particularly in the current economy.

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