



2015 Omnibus Language Addresses SNA Asks Including Sodium and Whole Grain

On December 13, Congress passed the Fiscal Year 2015 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, which addressed several of SNA's key requests to provide schools greater flexibility to plan healthy school meals that students will eat.

The key sections in the legislation and how they will impact SNA members are:

- Sodium – suspends sodium reductions below Target 1 “until the latest scientific research establishes the reduction is beneficial for children.” *Note: Since the Omnibus bill applies only to Fiscal Year 2015, SNA will advocate making this provision permanent through Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2015.*
- Whole Grains – USDA shall allow states to grant exemptions on the 100% whole grain rich requirement should an SFA demonstrate hardship, including financial, procurement, and student acceptability. Qualifying SFAs will be permitted to meet the July 2012 mandate that half of grains offered be whole grain rich. This provides a vehicle allowing states and schools to work together on flexibility for those schools struggling with this particular issue. *School meal programs should contact their state agencies to request an exemption.*
- Equipment grants – provides \$25 million in additional equipment grants to be distributed by the State Agencies.
- Chinese Chicken – schools will not be able to purchase chicken from China for use in the NSLP and SBP program.

The accompanying report language, which is **non-binding**, but serves as guidance for USDA, also addressed the following issues:

- Administrative Review Cycle – directs the Secretary to allow states to vary the frequency of monitoring and compliance reviews of each school food authority based on past school performance, with no cycle extending more than five years. The Secretary shall submit a report to the Committees that describes the Department's process for allowing States to prioritize monitoring and compliance reviews.
- Professional Standards – urges USDA to work to ensure there are no “unintended consequences” when implementing Professional Standards.

The legislation does **not** include a one year waiver for schools with a net loss for six months or more.

SNA is continuing to review the 1,696 page bill for any other areas of relevance to child nutrition. SNA thanks members for all of their help in contacting their Members of Congress over the past year to explain the impact of the well-intended regulations. We will continue to advocate for all of our members in the coming year as we turn our attention to the Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2015 effort.