Food and Nutrition Legislation

Lori Lynch
(202) 219-0689

The 102nd Congress convened in January 1991. Several food and nutrition bills have been introduced in the House and the Senate. A few are described below.

Nutrition

H.R. 82—Rep. Mervyn Dymally (CA)
This bill would establish a United States Commission on Obesity which would: (1) conduct research regarding the causes and treatment of obesity; (2) study the fast-food industry’s influence on obesity and diet habits; and (3) engage in public education programs regarding the health and social effects of obesity and promote exercise and diet as a means of prevention and control. The Commission would also make grants to public or private research institutions and universities to research the metabolic differences between obese and nonobese individuals and among ethnic groups. Grants would also be committed to research healthy diet habits and attitudes in young people for use in developing educational programs.

H.R. 817—Rep. Charles Rangel (NY)
The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act would be amended to require that the label or labeling of a food product state the specific common or usual name of any fat or oil. The label would also have to contain, by serving portions, the number of ounces or grams of fat, and the number of calories derived from saturated, polyunsaturated, and monounsaturated fats. In addition, the total amount of cholesterol, sodium, and potassium contained in each serving would be required on the label. The Secretary of Health and Human Services could exempt a food from these regulations if the labeling imposes an unreasonable burden or if the public would be adequately informed respecting the sodium or potassium content of the food by notices placed close to the food on display in retail outlets. The Secretary would also be permitted to exempt manufacturers or processors whose annual total sales were less than $500,000.

H.C.R. 61—Rep. Andrew Jacobs (IN)
This resolution calls for federally funded school lunches to provide optional meatless meals. Currently, federally funded school lunch programs seldom provide meatless meals, but an increasing number of school youths are rejecting meat diets.

The next three bills would amend the National School Lunch Act to extend eligibility to certain programs to receive refunds from the Child Care Food Program (CCFP). The CCFP currently may reimburse approved child care facilities for afternoon snacks.

H.R. 375—Rep. Alan Mollohan (WV)
This bill would extend eligibility for the CCFP to children receiving day care services pursuant to parents’ participation in State job opportunities and basic skills training programs.

S. 223—Sen. Mitch McConnell (KY)
This bill would extend eligibility for reimbursement under CCFP for meal supplements for children in after-school care at schools.

S. 224—Sen. Mitch McConnell (KY)
This bill would modify the criteria for determining whether a private organization providing nonresidential day care services is considered an institution under CCFP. The bill would start basing eligibility for child care food benefits on the number of children who qualify for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Act.

H.R. 544—Rep. Major Owens (NY)
This bill would amend the National School Lunch Act to restore eligibility for food supplement benefits under the dependent care food program to adolescent youth 18 years of age or under. It would also make children with disabilities eligible for such benefits at any age.

Food Safety and Quality

H.R. 222—Rep. Neal Smith (IA)
This bill would amend the Poultry Products Inspection Act to reestablish minimum inspection and processing standards. All poultry and poultry products would have to be slaughtered and processed under standards which would have complied with the rules and regulations and all inspection and reinspektion standards in effect July 1, 1977.

This bill would amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to require food and drug manufacturers to maintain a toll-free telephone line for inquiries about food containing added vitamins or minerals, herbal foods, foods for special uses, over-the-counter drugs and any
other food which makes a health or nutrition claim. It would also require that the labels and advertising of these products contain a reference to the toll-free line.

S. 35—Sen. Daniel Moynihan (NY)
This bill would establish a system to regulate bottled water. It would require the bottler to clearly identify the water source. It would also establish criteria concerning minimum well construction standards, distance separation from upstream wastewater discharge, or minimum distance separations from a variety of potential contamination sources such as abandoned wells, septic tanks, waste impoundments, and landfills. The standards for public drinking water would be applied to bottled water. The bill would require simple labeling procedures and expand the monitoring, testing and reporting procedures for bottled water. It would require standard definitions for drinking water, natural water, spring water, well water, distilled water, purified water, soda water, seltzer water, and mineral water.

Other
H.R. 156—Rep. Stephen Neal (NC)
All foodservice operations would receive instructions for removing food which has become lodged in a person’s throat. The instructional material would be distributed by the Department of Commerce. The foodservice operation could post instructions on the premises so employees would become familiar with techniques and could consult the instructions if a person were choking. If a foodservice operator were to act in accordance with the instructions in trying to assist the removal of food lodged in someone’s throat, no U.S. court could enter a judgment for ensuing damages against the operator.

H.R. 228—Rep. Neal Smith (IA)
This bill would clarify the eligibility of certain small businesses for loans under the Small Business Act. The bill would also aid, protect, and preserve small businesses in meat production and marketing by restricting the number of cattle, swine, or sheep that a meatpacker or a person owning more than 5 percent of the stock, voting power, or control of a meatpacker may slaughter in any one location per week. It also would restrict the number of cattle, swine, or sheep that a meatpacker or meat marketer may offer for sale or may offer to purchase in a week.

H.R. 278—Rep. Cardiss Collins (IL)
This bill would make it an unfair practice for a retailer to increase the price of any food, drug, device, or cosmetic product once the retailer marks the price on it. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) would require retailers to establish a system of audit so that FTC could enforce prohibition on price increases. The FTC would be permitted to order a retailer who violated the prohibition to refund any amounts of money the retailer obtained by increasing the price.