

**USDA Outlook Forum**  
**Remarks by Rep. Lynn Woolsey**  
**February 22, 1999**

BEFORE I BECAME A MEMBER OF CONGRESS, I RAISED FOUR CHILDREN. MY MOST BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES IN THIS ROLE WERE TO ENSURE THAT MY CHILDREN WERE RAISED WITH LOVE AND DIRECTION; WERE SHELTERED; CLOTHED; AND FED. IF YOU THINK THE JOB OF A MEMBER OF CONGRESS IS TOUGH, TRY MOM OF FOUR... ESPECIALLY FEEDING AN ALL-AMERICAN FOOTBALL PLAYER (AND HIS BUDDIES).

NOW, MY FAMILY IS GROWN UP, AND, I SERVE IN CONGRESS. BUT, CHILDREN TEACH PARENTS LESSONS AND ONE OF THESE LESSONS REMAINS ALWAYS WITH ME: CHILDREN THRIVE WHEN THEY COME FIRST.

WHEN I WAS ELECTED TO THE HOUSE, I TOLD THE DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP THAT I WANTED TO SERVE ON WHAT IS NOW THE EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE COMMITTEE, BECAUSE THAT IS WHERE THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISIONS CONCERNING OUR CHILDREN ARE MADE.

IN MY FRESHMAN YEAR . . . WHEN WE WERE IN THE MAJORITY, I PASSED THE COORDINATE TO EDUCATE ACT, TITLE XI OF THE ESEA REAUTHORIZATION. FROM EXPERIENCE I KNEW THAT THE FRAGMENTED LIVES OF MANY PARENTS OFTEN TIMES MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO ATTEND TO THEIR CHILDREN'S NEEDS. MY BILL MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR SCHOOLS TO BRING HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES TO ONE CONVENIENT LOCATION -- THE SCHOOL SITE.

WHEN THE REPUBLICANS TOOK OVER THE HOUSE IN 1995, WE HAD TO FIGHT THEIR ATTEMPTS TO PUT ALL NUTRITION PROGRAMS IN WELFARE BLOCK GRANTS, SEVERELY CUTTING FUNDING, AND PLACING OUR SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS IN JEOPARDY.

BUT WE FOUGHT BACK, AND WE PREVAILED. THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TOLD THE THEN NEW MAJORITY THAT SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS WERE VIEWED AS A FUNDAMENTAL PART OF OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. AND, NOW, WE'RE GOING TO MAKE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS EQUALLY AS IMPORTANT.

LAST YEAR, CONGRESS INSERTED MY PROVISION TO FUND SIX PILOT SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS INTO THE CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION ACT. EARLIER THIS MONTH, THE PRESIDENT RELEASED HIS BUDGET INCLUDING \$13 MILLION TO FUND THESE PROGRAMS. MY ULTIMATE GOAL IS, OF COURSE, TO EXPAND THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM TO INCLUDE ALL ELEMENTARY

SCHOOL CHILDREN .

SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS ARE TOO OFTEN CATEGORIZED AS "JUST ANOTHER FORM OF WELFARE." BUT THE FACT IS THAT IN THIS SOCIETY WHERE TWO WORKING PARENTS ARE THE NORM, BREAKFAST PROGRAMS ARE VITALLY IMPORTANT TO WORKING FAMILIES AT EVERY INCOME LEVEL.

EVEN IN MY RELATIVELY AFFLUENT DISTRICT, TOO MANY KIDS EAT A SKIMPY BREAKFAST OR MISS IT ENTIRELY BECAUSE THEIR PARENTS ARE RUSHING OUT THE DOOR TO BEAT THE COMMUTE TRAFFIC.

SO WHILE WE ARE LOOKING AT A VARIETY OF WAYS TO IMPROVE SCHOOLS -- THE MOST OBVIOUS CAN ESCAPE OUR ATTENTION. FOR WE KNOW THAT THE GREATEST TEACHERS, IN THE VERY BEST SCHOOLS CANNOT TEACH A HUNGRY CHILD. AND WE KNOW THAT CHILDREN WITH GROWLING STOMACHS, SIMPLY CANNOT LEARN.

ALL OF US SHOULD LOOK AT BREAKFAST PROGRAMS IN A DIFFERENT WAY. THEY ARE A LEARNING TOOL, JUST LIKE BOOKS AND COMPUTERS. THEY ENSURE THAT ALL OF OUR CHILDREN ARE READY TO LEARN.

STUDIES REAFFIRM WHAT WE HAVE KNOWN ALL ALONG: KIDS WHO START THE DAY WITH A GOOD BREAKFAST DO BETTER IN SCHOOL. IN FACT, TWO RECENTLY PUBLISHED STUDIES SHOW CLEARLY THAT STUDENTS WHO EAT BREAKFAST IMPROVE BOTH THEIR GRADES AND THEIR CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR .

LAST YEAR I WAS ALSO ABLE TO CONVINCING CONGRESS TO EXPAND ELIGIBILITY FOR SUBSIDIZED SNACKS AT AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS TO TEENAGERS AGED 13 TO 18.

NO, I'M NOT ADVOCATING "TWINKIES FOR TEENS." THE FACT IS, AS THE PRESIDENT HAS POINTED OUT, THE MAJORITY OF JUVENILE CRIMES ARE COMMITTED AFTER THE SCHOOL BELL AND BEFORE THE DINNER BELL WHEN PARENTS RETURN HOME FROM WORK.

IF WE ARE TO PREVENT JUVENILE CRIME, ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE, AND TEEN PREGNANCIES; IF WE ARE TO GIVE OUR KIDS POSITIVE THINGS TO DO -- MORE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR ADOLESCENTS ARE NEEDED. AND, SNACKS ARE A BIG PART OF ANY AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM.

AND THERE IS MORE WORK TO BE DONE:

- WE NEED TO INCREASE THE REIMBURSEMENT RATES FOR THE SUMMER FOOD AND CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAMS.

- WE MUST RESTORE START-UP FUNDS FOR SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND SUMMER FOOD PROGRAMS.
- COVERAGE FOR A FOURTH MEAL FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE IN CHILD CARE CENTERS FOR LONG HOURS MUST BE REINSTATED.
- AND, LOW-INCOME CHILDREN IN PRIVATE CHILD CARE CENTERS SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN. THEY TOO MUST BE MADE ELIGIBLE FOR SUBSIDIZED SNACKS AND MEALS.

YOU KNOW THAT I WILL CONTINUE TO WORK UNTIL THERE ARE NO MORE HUNGRY CHILDREN IN OUR SCHOOLS OR CHILD CARE CENTERS.

PERHAPS WE NEED TO UPDATE THAT OLD SAYING ATTRIBUTED TO NAPOLEON, "AN ARMY TRAVELS ON ITS STOMACH." SO DO OUR CHILDREN. CHILDREN GROW FIT, LEARN BETTER AND LEAD HEALTHIER, HAPPIER LIVES -- AND STAY OUT OF TROUBLE -- WHEN THEY EAT GOOD FOOD.

THE FARMERS OF AMERICA HAVE THE MEANS TO FEED EVERY CHILD IN EVERY HOME IN THE NATION. THE COST OF SUCH PROGRAMS CAN EASILY BE ABSORBED WITHIN OUR BALANCED BUDGET FRAMEWORK -- IN MY MIND, A FEW LESS B-2 BOMBERS AT \$1.2 BILLION EACH WOULD EASILY PAY THE BILL.

BASICALLY, IT'S A QUESTION OF PRIORITIES. AS WE HEAD INTO THE NEXT CENTURY, I KNOW THAT MY PRIORITY WILL CONTINUE TO BE OUR CHILDREN -- 25 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION AND 100 PERCENT OF OUR FUTURE.

WHEN WE MAKE THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN BETTER -- THROUGH BETTER NUTRITION, HEALTH, AND EDUCATION -- WE ARE ENSURING THAT OUR NATION ENDURES.

THANK YOU.