

e-Edition Plus

A current events feature for teaching with electronic editions.

By Emilia Pastina

New law would give kids safer and better school food

A plan to make school food safer, more nutritious and available to more students just received two thumbs up.

The U.S. Senate and the U.S. House have now both approved a bill called the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.

President Obama is expected to sign it into law.

The new legislation calls for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to create new standards for all food in schools, including school lunches and vending machine snacks. It also sets new rules to expand school lunch and breakfast programs.

The bill states that schools that provide cafeteria food that meets new USDA nutrition standards will receive a 6-cent increase in the meal reimbursement rate. The nutrition standards will be based on recommendations from the U.S. Institute of Medicine.

To encourage farm-to-school programs — something supported by First Lady Michelle Obama — \$40 million in federal funding will help schools buy vegetables from local farms for lunch programs.

"The legislation marks a new day for how we think about school meals and other child nutrition programs," said California U.S. Rep. George Miller, who chairs the House Committee on Education and Labor, in a USA Today article. "This will allow us to get rid of the junk food in our schools."

Safety first

The new bill aims to make school food safer, as well as healthier. Under the legislation, the USDA and the U.S.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) — the two agencies that watch over the U.S. food supply — would put new procedures in place that would notify them when recalled food had been sent to schools.

The bill would also require cafeteria workers to be better trained and add new food-handling and storage rules.

"It is unconscionable that food that is known to be tainted could ever be fed to our children in school cafeterias," said U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, a member of the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee. "This legislation marks a major step in the right direction. Now ... cafeteria workers across the country will be provided with better safety training so school children ... will be much safer."

Fighting hunger

Currently, about 62 percent of the 31 million students who eat food at school qualify for help with the cost. Under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, more students from families that can't afford the cost of school breakfast or lunch will receive the meals free or at a reduced price.

The legislation will allow school administrators to

automatically approve students who are eligible by using U.S. Census and Medicaid health and financial assistance data. This means that around 115,000 more low-income students will qualify for free or reduced-rate meals.

"This bill really is a historic opportunity to really address childhood hunger and obesity," said U.S. Senator Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, who chairs the Senate Agriculture Committee. "It will provide more money to schools in exchange for serving healthier meals to children."

ZUMA Press/Newscom



A plan approved by the U.S. Senate and U.S. House would promote healthier foods, and more locally grown foods, in school cafeterias.

Talk About the News

- **The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 aims to make school food healthy, safer and available to everyone, including students whose families can't afford it. As a class, talk about why kids should be exposed to healthy food in school. Talk about the reasons lawmakers, school officials and parents want better snack options in school vending machines. Discuss whether nutrition decisions should be left up to students or to the government and other adults.**

Learning Standards: Engaging peers in constructive conversation about matters of public concern by clarifying issues, considering opposing views, applying democratic values, anticipating consequences and working toward making decisions.

Explore Your e-Edition



- **One of the goals of the new bill is to fight childhood obesity while teaching healthy eating habits. Search today's e-Edition to find healthy food choices. Based on your findings, create a menu that includes breakfast, lunch, dinner and an after-school snack. Write a paragraph about why you chose these foods.**

Learning Standards: Acquiring information from multiple sources; understanding what constitutes good health and nutrition.

- **The Hunger-Free Kids Act aims to identify more students in need of free or reduced-price school meals. Read today's e-Edition to find an example of someone or a group of people needing help from the community or government. Write a letter to the editor discussing why strong communities, or the government, lend assistance to the neediest families.**

Learning Standards: Composing coherent written essays that express a position on a public issue and justifying the position with reasoned arguments; using the persuasive power text to effect change in the community.

- **Food safety is a concern in homes, restaurants and schools. Those in favor of the new food bill want better procedures and more education when it comes to food safety for school meals. Find an example from today's e-Edition where better procedures or education would help solve a problem. Propose a new law to achieve this goal.**

Learning Standard: Engaging in activities intended to contribute to solving a national or international problem students have studied.

How Well Did You Read?

Understanding what you read is a skill that will help you all through life. Review the story about school food by answering the questions below.

1. **According to the story, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 aims to make school meals:**

- A. Healthier
- B. Safer
- C. Available to all students
- D. All of the above

2. **In the story, the word "legislation" means:**

- A. People who pass laws
- B. A proposed law
- C. A school rule
- D. A speech by a lawmaker

3. **According to the story, the bill still needs to be signed by:**

- A. The President
- B. The U.S. House
- C. The U.S. Senate
- D. All of the above

4. **According to the story, the two agencies that police the U.S. food supply are:**

- A. The USDA and FDA
- B. The USDA and the NBA
- C. The FDA and the NAACP
- D. The FDA and the NFL

5. **According to the story, how many students eat meals at school:**

- A. 3,100
- B. 31,000
- C. 310,000
- D. 31 million