

Position Statement: AGAINST

Should the government play a role in implementing school policies that address obesity and nutrition?

NO, the government should NOT play a role. The government should respect the voluntary choices made by individuals when it comes to what they eat. Students generally understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy foods and make choices about food based on complex personal preferences. Government intervention in this process is unnecessary and oversteps the role of government.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act limits a high school student's lunch to 850 calories, which is too low for growing students, especially those participating in sports. A high school boy, on average, needs between 2,200 and 3,200 calories a day, and a high school girl requires between 1,800 to 2,400 calories. A student involved in a strenuous sport may need 3,500 calories a day. When sports teams meet directly after school, students may have to rely on food provided in the schools. If high calorie food choices are removed from vending machines under the law, students will have even fewer options to keep them sustained until their next meal.

By increasing whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, and limiting fat, sugar, and salt, the new law does not provide students with food that they want to eat. This leads to increased waste, as students throw away food they must take but will not eat. Because students do not want to eat the new school lunches, about one million students dropped from the full-priced Nation School Lunch program in the 2012-2013 school year.

About 10% of the affected schools have found the program too expensive to implement. Even though the Federal government reimburses schools more money per lunch than in years past, schools are paying more for the type of food they are mandated to serve. Schools having trouble adopting the new standards should be able to opt out of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act and provide their students choices based on the needs and wants of their student population. The government should not intervene in this most basic aspect of our lives.

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