

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 20, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

I am pleased to submit to the Congress today the National Food Stamp Reform Act of 1975.

I call to the attention of the Congress the particular importance of this reform proposal for two reasons:

First, we -- the Executive Branch and the Congress -- have an obligation to work together to reform a Federal assistance program that has been widely abused.

Second, we -- the Executive Branch and the Congress -- must begin now to work together to make those changes which will enable us to hold down federal spending in fiscal year 1976 and meet the spending ceiling of \$395 billion for fiscal year 1977.

My recommendations for dealing with the Food Stamp assistance program follow a fundamental principle on which I stand: The Federal government should help, within the limits of national resources, those who are in need; but we should not give one dollar of Federal assistance to those not in need.

It is in that spirit, the spirit of providing dignified and humane help to those who are in need, but none to those who are not or should not be, that I recommend the enactment of the "National Food Stamp Reform Act of 1975", which would:

1. Reduce costs by more than \$1.2 billion per year.
2. Limit eligibility to those whose gross income less the standard deduction is below the poverty level (\$5050 for a family of four).
3. Make the program more realistic by measuring actual income over the preceding 90 days for purposes of eligibility determinations, rather than estimating future income, and requiring recipients to report their financial status on a monthly basis.
4. Increase benefits only for those at the very lowest income level.
5. Eliminate legal abuses and cut the cost of administration by replacing current variable and complex deductions with a standard deduction of \$100 a month.

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6. Set a standard deduction of \$125 a month for households with elderly members.
7. Establish a minimum age for qualification as a separate household.
8. Require able-bodied recipients to seek, accept and retain gainful employment.
9. Eliminate categorical eligibility for recipients of public assistance.
10. Require any family which receives food stamps to spend 30 percent of household income for the stamps.

These proposed changes are based on extensive review by Executive Departments involved in administering and supervising the Food Stamp program and on consultations with a bipartisan coalition of members of the Senate and House of Representatives concerned with Food Stamp abuses. They are essential to real reform.

The need to control the growth and abuse of the Food Stamp program is broadly recognized.

What we need now is action by Congress.

GERALD R. FORD

THE WHITE HOUSE,

October 20, 1975.

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