

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 3, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

I am returning without my signature H.R. 4222, the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Act Amendments of 1975.

If this bill provided food for children truly in need, as I proposed in March, I would give it my wholehearted support and approve it immediately. Children of families living in poverty who need help in raising their level of nutrition should receive that help.

It was with this in mind that I recommended early this year a reform of the Federal Government's existing child feeding programs. My proposal would have provided assistance by the Federal Government for all infants and children from families below the poverty level. It would have halted the steady expansion of Federal child nutrition subsidies to increasing numbers of non-needy children. By so doing, it would have concentrated more funds on feeding needy children, yet saved the taxpayers of this Nation almost \$4 billion over the next five years.

I recommended one block grant be made to States to provide them with greater flexibility to tailor food and nutrition programs to their own conditions and preferences. At the same time, States would have been relieved of much administrative and costly red tape. Such an approach would eliminate the wastefulness of present overlapping programs which often subsidize the same meal.

I recognize that H.R. 4222 would enlarge our present efforts to feed the needy children I am concerned about. But it would go far beyond that and greatly expand Federal subsidies to children from families which do not need Federal subsidies.

By extending aid to families not in need, this bill would add \$1.2 billion to my budget proposals for the current fiscal year. I cannot accept such fiscal irresponsibility when we face the real danger that the budget deficit could reach \$70 billion instead of the already high limit of \$60 billion I set earlier this year. As Congress keeps adding to the deficit, Congress adds to inflationary pressures which could push us back into recession.

We should not expand subsidies to families with incomes above the poverty level. I believe the way to help most American families is to take actions to hold down inflation and reduce their tax burdens.

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The consolidated food and nutrition program I proposed in March for needy children would have greatly improved our existing programs. The program sent to me by the Congress with disproportionate subsidies for the non-needy is worse than the programs we now have.

I propose to the Congress two choices: (1) Extend our present programs at this time, or (2) reconsider and act favorably on my proposal for needy children.

Either course would be in the best interests of needy children, the Nation's economic health and the taxpaying public.

GERALD R. FORD

THE WHITE HOUSE,  
OCTOBER 3, 1975

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