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JULY 6, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have signed S. 2853, the Emergency Food Stamp Vendor Accountability Act of 1976.

I applaud the efforts of the Congress in enacting this legislation to make food stamp vendors accountable for food stamps that they hold as well as for the funds collected.

The bill is designed to eliminate the widely publicized coupon vendor abuses. The legislation will ensure that persons authorized to sell food stamps promptly deposit the cash collected. Also, it will help minimize the potential for abuse by providing specific criminal penalties for certain violations of the statutory requirements. Food stamp program costs will be reduced by eliminating losses of interest due to late deposits of cash collected by the vendors. Further, the enactment of criminal penalties will be a significant inducement for vendor compliance with food stamp program requirements.

Although I am pleased to sign this measure because it represents a significant step toward improving program accountability, it falls far short of the meaningful food stamp program reforms which are needed to redirect food stamp benefits to the truly needy and to eliminate from the program persons with income substantially above the poverty level.

In 1975, I submitted to the Congress a comprehensive food stamp reform proposal which was aimed at simplifying program administration and achieving program equity, as well as strengthening program accountability. The Congress has been working on program reforms, but as yet no substantive reforms have been enacted.

Each day that goes by without action to reform the food stamp program costs the taxpayers about \$3 million. I continue to believe that the Congress should act quickly on my legislative proposals so that reforms can be implemented to control costs and abuses of the food stamp program.

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