



Office of

Herman Talmadge *of Georgia*

UNITED STATES SENATE

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ELIMINATING PURCHASE PRICE COULD BLOCK FOOD STAMP REFORM EFFORTS, TALMADGE SAYS

WASHINGTON, D.C.--Senator Herman E. Talmadge of Georgia said today that doing away with the purchase requirement in the food stamp program also would do away with any chance of food stamp reform in the Congress this year.

Talmadge, Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee which approved the National Food Stamp Reform Act of 1976, said that an amendment to eliminate the requirement that most participants pay a portion of their monthly food stamp allotments could increase the cost of the program by \$2.1 billion.

The Georgia Senator added that, if the Senate votes to do away with the purchase requirement, he would favor ending the food stamp program altogether and folding it in with regular welfare programs.

The current estimate of the cost of the program in Fiscal 1977 is \$6.3 billion, and the Committee bill would reduce that by \$635 million.

In a letter to daily newspaper editors, Talmadge pointed out that any food stamp reform bill which would add to the Federal deficit almost certainly would draw a veto, "ending any hope of legislative food stamp reform this year." A deadlock in Congress, he said, would prove that the President was right in saying that Congress was incapable of acting on food stamp reform, and would assure that the President's proposed regulations would be the only reform achieved.

Maintaining the purchase requirement, he said, is essential to maintaining the nutritional purpose of the food stamp program because its elimination would do away with the unique combination of the participant's share and the Federal share of the family's food budget.

"Four billion dollars, the total amount paid by the participants, now guaranteed for food purchases by low-income families, at least in part would be released for non-food expenditures," he said.

Without the purchase requirement, the food stamp program will be indistinguishable from, and duplicate and overlap, existing welfare programs, Talmadge said. "Therefore, if the no-purchase amendment is adopted, I would favor eliminating the food stamp program as a separate effort of the Department of Agriculture and combining it with the other welfare programs of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare," he added.

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(Copy of Senator Talmadge's Letter Attached.)