

CONFERENCE REPORT TO  
H.R. 13172 -- WIC PROGRAM

MR. DOLE. MR. PRESIDENT, TODAY, I AM CONFIDENT THIS BODY WILL ENACT ANOTHER APPROPRIATIONS BILL. MONEY WILL BE APPROPRIATED AND PROGRAMS WILL CONTINUE. THE FUNDING FOR SO MANY OF THESE PROGRAMS SEEMS TO FLOW SO SMOOTHLY, SOMETIMES TOO SMOOTHLY. BUT THERE IS ONE WORTHWHILE PROGRAM WHOSE FUNDING DOES NOT FLOW. IN FACT, IT BARELY TRICKLES. INDEED, IT SEEMS TO HAVE NEARLY DRIED UP.

IT'S THE WIC PROGRAM, BY FAR ONE OF THE MOST PRODUCTIVE AND EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS THE SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE HAS EVER WRITTEN INTO LAW. AS THE RANKING MINORITY MEMBER OF THAT COMMITTEE, I AM PROUD TO HAVE SUPPORTED THIS EFFORT WHICH SAVES LIVES AND IMPROVES THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR MANY NEEDY AMERICANS AT NUTRITIONAL RISK. THE WIC PROGRAM IS THERE TO GUARANTEE THAT NO PREGNANT WOMAN SHOULD EVER HAVE TO RISK HER LIFE, AND THE LIFE SHE CARRIES, BECAUSE OF INADEQUATE NUTRITION. IT IS THERE TO MAKE SURE THE LIFE OF A NEWLY-BORN INFANT IS NOT IRREPARABLY DAMAGED BECAUSE HE OR SHE SUFFERED FROM POOR NUTRITION IN THOSE MOST IMPORTANT EARLY MONTHS AND YEARS OF LIFE. IT'S A COUPLE OF DOLLARS WORTH OF FOOD WHICH CAN SAFEGUARD THE FUTURE HEALTH OF AN OTHERWISE LOST GENERATION OF OUR CITIZENS.

SIMPLY STATED, WIC WORKS!

BUT CLEARLY, THE BENEFITS PROVIDED THROUGH WIC DO ABSOLUTELY NO GOOD TO A WOMAN OR CHILD WHO DOESN'T HAPPEN TO LIVE IN AN AREA SERVED BY A WIC CLINIC. OUR COMPASSION -- AND GOOD COMMON SENSE, I MAY ADD -- IN ENACTING THIS PROGRAM ONLY GOES AS FAR AS THE GEOGRAPHICAL BORDERS OF A PARTICULAR WIC PROJECT AREA.

RIGHT NOW, THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WHICH RUNS THE WIC PROGRAM, IS SITTING ON 235 LOCAL HEALTH AGENCY APPLICATIONS WHICH WOULD PROVIDE VIRTUALLY LIFE-GIVING NUTRITION ASSISTANCE TO OVER 500,000 WOMEN AND CHILDREN. HALF A MILLION HIGHLY VULNERABLE, POOR, AND LIKELY UNDERNOURISHED PEOPLE ARE SEPARATED FROM THAT ALL-IMPORTANT FOOD ASSISTANCE BECAUSE USDA HAS NOT SEEN FIT TO FUND THESE PROGRAMS.

IN MY OWN STATE OF KANSAS, ONLY 3,092 PERSONS ARE RECEIVING WIC BENEFITS. YET THE USDA HAS DELAYED MEANINGFUL ACTION OF APPLICATIONS TO INCREASE THE KANSAS CASELOAD TO 9,069. IN WYANDOTTE COUNTY, THE PROJECT AREA DESIGNATED BY THE STATE BUREAU OF MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH AS HAVING THE HIGHEST NUTRITIONAL RISK, A MEGER 593 CASELOAD HAS BEEN FUNDED EVEN THOUGH THE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT HAS JUSTIFIED ITS APPLICATION FOR A 2,921 CASELOAD. WHAT POSSIBLE JUSTIFICATION CAN THERE BE FOR THIS INACTION? WHAT REASON? IT'S A SOBERING THOUGHT TO CONSIDER THAT LIVES MAY HAVE BEEN LOST OR RELEGATED TO FUTURE ILL-HEALTH BECAUSE SOME ADMINISTRATIVE DECISION GOT BETWEEN STATUTORILY-PROVIDED WIC FUNDS AND LOCAL APPLICANT AGENCIES.



IS IT THAT WE HAVE FAILED TO PROVIDE AUTHORIZATION FOR THE USE OF WIC MONIES? HAVE WE FAILED TO APPROPRIATE THE FUNDS FOR WIC EXPANSION? IT'S A SMALL COMFORT TO THIS SENATOR THAT WE HAVE DONE ALL IN OUR POWER TO HELP WIC WORK.

SADLY, IT'S A PROBLEM OF USDA NOT DOING ITS JOB. THEY HAVE THE MONEY; INDEED, THEY WILL HAVE \$125,000,000 LEFT OVER OUT OF THE FUNDS WE HAVE PROVIDED THIS FISCAL YEAR. WHAT CAN THE SENATOR FROM KANSAS TELL THE HEALTH AGENCIES IN HIS STATE WHO ARE WAITING FOR THE MONEY TO FEED OVER 6,500 PEOPLE IN NEED OF WIC ASSISTANCE?

IN THE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE WE HAVE LABORED TO MAKE OUR INTENT CLEAR. IN 1972, WE ENACTED LEGISLATION WHICH STARTED THE WIC PROGRAM, BUT IT TOOK TWO YEARS AND NUMEROUS COURT DECISIONS FOR IT TO BE OF ANY ASSISTANCE TO A MOTHER OR CHILD WHO NEEDED IT. AND LAST YEAR WE WORKED HARD TO REPORT TO THIS BODY A BILL THAT EXPANDED WIC TO \$250,000,000 A YEAR SO THAT MORE PEOPLE COULD BE SERVED. IN FACT, IN ORDER TO MAKE OUR INTENTION ABSOLUTELY CLEAR, WE PROVIDED A MEANS OF GUARANTEEING SMOOTH SAILING FOR WIC BY REQUIRING "SECTION 32" FUNDS TO BE USED FOR THIS YEAR, THE TRANSITION QUARTER, AND NEXT YEAR IF REGULAR APPROPRIATIONS WERE LATE OR NOT AVAILABLE. AND WE MADE SURE THAT ANY UNSPENT MONIES WERE TO BE AVAILABLE FOR USE IN WIC UNTIL THEY WERE EXPENDED.

OUR LEGISLATION HAS FUNDED A PROGRAM THAT ONLY REACHES A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE PEOPLE WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM ITS HIGH-PROTEIN FOOD. THAT THE AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT SHOULD ARBITRARILY ERODE EVEN THE LIMITED POTENTIAL OF OUR LEGISLATION IS INTOLERABLE.

SO I SAY TO THE ADMINISTRATORS HIDING BEHIND THE PILES OF  
UNANSWERED APPLICATIONS: ENOUGH DELAY! STOP THE STALLING! PROCESS  
THOSE APPLICATIONS AND FUND THOSE NEEDED CLINICS. WE DON'T PASS LAWS  
HERE JUST SO THAT OUR FRIENDS IN THE PRESS GALLERY CAN TELL THE FOLKS  
AT HOME HOW COMPASSIONATE WE ARE. IT'S NO LONGER A QUESTION OF COMPASSION.  
THE LAWS ARE THERE. IT'S JUST A MATTER OF FOLLOWING THEM.