

STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

Support for the W.I.C. Program

Mr. President, of all the federally-funded child nutrition programs, the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is surely one of the finest. The WIC program is intended to ensure that women and children receive adequate nutrition at the time when it is most vital to the development of human life. To deny an impoverished pregnant woman proper nutrition is to greatly enhance the risk that her child will suffer malnourishment, or even brain damage. It is precisely this danger that the WIC program is designed to address. It seems to me to be a misplaced set of priorities which has led to administrative foot-dragging on implementation of the WIC expansion mandated by overwhelming Congressional majorities last fall.

Although I voted for the child nutrition bill last October and voted to override President Ford's veto of the legislation, I am not one who could be said to be totally committed to each and every federal child nutrition program. Some are better than others. A reasonable consolidation of many of the federal child nutrition plans should, I think, be seriously explored. I am not suggesting that I favor the Administration's "block grant" legislation. This year's proposal by the Department of Agriculture will, in all probability, be accorded the same treatment as last year's block grant legislation, since it reduces funding drastically for all child nutrition assistance programs. Nevertheless, I believe a reasonable consolidation of existing child nutrition programs has conceptual merit, and I intend to explore further the possibility of such legislation in this session of Congress.

-2-

In the meantime, I feel the Administration's reluctance to implement Public Law 94-105 and, in particular, its WIC provisions is unwise. Already, the House of Representatives has overwhelmingly rejected the USDA's deferral request. Clearly, the will of the vast majority in Congress has not changed since the day we voted to override President Ford's veto of the Child Nutrition bill.

At the present time, due to the Administration's reluctance to expand the Wic program by spending the monies appropriated, my own State of Kansas has been unable to secure a modest expansion of the program. Kansas now has only 2600 participants in the WIC Program. This is a very small number, yet the program has been so effective that the State has justified its request to expand service by 3300 participants.

Because there are thousands of needy mothers and children waiting to receive benefits from long-standing WIC applications, I support the amendment to include \$62.5 million for the WIC program for the Transitional Quarter. This represents no increase in funding for WIC. It is merely a reaffirmation of our support for the WIC program.