

United States Senate

MEMORANDUM

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Senators Muskie and Bellmon

Dear Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ranking Minority Member:

We are writing to ask your assistance in averting a serious crisis that will face 22 million Americans on June 1 unless the Congress acts to provide additional funding for the Food Stamp Program.

Congress must complete action on three measures to resolve this dilemma -- a revised Second Concurrent Budget Resolution for 1980, S. 1390 authorizing additional expenditures for the Food Stamp Program, and a supplemental appropriations bill. Because the Secretary of Agriculture must issue notices in sufficient time for States to adjust their systems, Congress must act by May 15 to avoid interruption of benefits. This gives us only 17 calendar days in which to finish the necessary actions.

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The first step, as you know, is the revision of the Second Concurrent Budget Resolution. We are deeply concerned that the postponement of the beginning of debate on S. Con. Res. 86, coupled with the need for sufficient time for a full airing of the vital issues of the First Budget Resolution for Fiscal '81, will cause a delay that will seriously jeopardize the ability of Congress to meet the May 15 deadline. Therefore, we urge you to give serious consideration to separating the revision of the Second Resolution from S. Con. Res. 86.

Food stamp recipients are among the neediest Americans. Half of them have gross incomes of less than \$3,600 per year, and 75 percent of them have gross incomes under \$4,800 per year. These are people that have no other resources to fall back on. If food stamps are not distributed in a timely manner, many of them will have little or no food for the duration of the cut-off.

We would urge you also, in revising the Second Concurrent Resolution, to insure full funding for the Food Stamp Program

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through the end of the fiscal year. According to the latest CBO estimates, this will require additional budget authority of \$2.9 billion (including offsets for savings), an increase of \$500 million over the funding level anticipated by the Budget Committee's revised Second Resolution. We consider this additional funding to be consistent with the Budget Committee's commitment to full funding as stated in its reports on both the First and Second Concurrent Resolutions for FY '80.

We believe that acting separately on the revision of the Second Resolution and increasing the allowance for food stamps to the full funding amount will demonstrate both the strength of the budget process in meeting emergency situations in a responsible, timely manner and the commitment of the Congress to feeding hungry Americans.

Sincerely,

BOB DOLE

GEORGE McGOVERN