

State of Vermont

House of Representatives



Montpelier, Vermont

Joint House Resolution

J.R.H. 13

Joint resolution urging the United States Department of Agriculture to authorize each state to create its own list of foods eligible for purchase with federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program funds or alternatively to authorize a demonstration project allowing the state of Vermont to develop its own list

Offered by: Representatives Olsen of Jamaica, Branagan of Georgia, Crawford of Burke, Dickinson of St. Albans Town, Greshin of Warren, Hebert of Vernon, Helm of Fair Haven, Howard of Cambridge, Koch of Barre Town, Komline of Dorset, Malcolm of Pawlet, Masland of Thetford, McAllister of Highgate, Pearson of Burlington, Stevens of Shoreham, Wilson of Manchester, Wright of Burlington and Young of Albany

Whereas, the 2008 Farm Bill redesignated the federal Food Stamp Program as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and this change became effective October 1, 2008, and

Whereas, in Vermont, the department for children and families (the department) administers SNAP under the name 3SquaresVT, and

Whereas, one element of 3SquaresVT is the provision of funds for eligible individuals including those: whose gross household income is equal to or less than 185 percent of the federal poverty level based on household size; who have children and receive the Vermont earned income tax credit; or whose household includes a disabled person at least 60 years old notwithstanding the 185 percent household income limitation, but the department may still be taking into consideration the economic resources available to the household, and

Whereas, the United States Department of Agriculture encourages SNAP recipients to follow healthy nutritional practices, and the 2008 Farm Bill authorized \$20 million for pilot projects to evaluate nutrition-promotion aspects of SNAP, and

Whereas, although the state of Vermont controls the administration of the 3SquaresVT program, it does not have control over the foods eligible for purchase with SNAP funds, and

Whereas, according to the department for children and families, 86 percent of 3SquaresVT individual recipients are also enrolled in a state-funded health insurance program such as Medicaid or VHAP, and comparable situations may possibly exist in other states, and

Whereas, despite the federal concern about the nutritional quality of SNAP-funded food purchases, the USDA in accordance with 7 CFR § 271.2 (11)(1-2) defines eligible food as “any food or food product intended for human consumption except alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and hot foods and hot food products prepared for immediate consumption” as well as “seeds and plants to grow foods for the personal consumption of eligible households,” and

Whereas, based on this definition, soft drinks, candy, cookies, crackers, bakery cakes, and ice cream are eligible food items, and

Whereas, excessive consumption of these food items does not represent nutritious dietary practices and could cause state-financed health care expenditures to increase due to problems related to the sugar and fat content contained in these products, and

Whereas, if 3SquaresVT recipients purchased fewer soft drinks, cookies, crackers, bakery cakes, and less candy and ice cream, they would retain more funds for purchasing healthier foods such as fruits and vegetables, and

Whereas, a sales tax on sugary products would not result in a Medicaid savings because federal law prohibits the imposition of a sales or excise tax on food purchased with SNAP vouchers, and

Whereas, were the states authorized to develop their own lists of foods that may be purchased with SNAP funds, they could potentially improve the health of SNAP recipients and reduce the states’ expenses for health care costs, and

Whereas, alternatively, 7 CFR 282.2 authorizes USDA to establish federal demonstration projects, and such a project could allow a state to design an alternative food list for purchase with SNAP funds, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly urges the United States Department of Agriculture to authorize each state to create its own list of foods eligible for purchase with federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program funds or alternatively to authorize a demonstration project allowing the state of Vermont to develop its own list, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to United States Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, to Commissioner for Children and Families Dave Yacovone, and to the Vermont Congressional Delegation.