

AKSNA

Alaska School Nutrition Association

March 23, 2009

Honorable Congressman Young,

On behalf of the Alaska School Nutrition Association (AKSNA) I would like to congratulate you on your re-election. It is a time of change and extreme need in our country and we look forward to your leadership.

As a former member of the military and a supporter of child nutrition, I thought you would like to know about the Military Nutrition Protection Act introduced by Senator Michael Bennett from Colorado. He is seeking to exclude combat pay in eligibility requirements that eliminate dependents of deployed service members out of any special nutrition assistance programs. Those include free and reduced price school meals and supplemental nutrition assistance for women, infants, and children, otherwise known as "WIC" programs. Current regulations allow us to exclude the portion of income sent to the deployed household member yet that is not typically enough to provide benefits to these children.

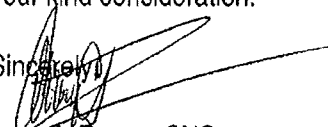
In the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, we have two military bases -- Ft. Wainwright and Eielson Air Force Base. There are currently over 5,000 members deployed overseas, several who have left behind families. The military receive many different types of adjustments -- e.g. COLA, BAH (housing assistance) -- that when combat pay is received can result in their children being ineligible for meal benefits. This can cause additional stress for those deployed and the families.

Last month, I spoke with state Representative Jay Ramras' office regarding the above issue and the disparity between households living on and those off of military installations. Soon all military families will be receiving BAH and we are informed that families on military installations do not have to include the housing assistance as income but those living off the installation do. This causes a disparity in treatment as school nutrition directors have been informed that if assistance is received monetarily and not in-kind, it must be counted as income when processing children for meal benefits. He and his staff are drafting a resolution supporting the exclusion of housing assistance as income for all military households.

These issues are seen every place a military installation is -- from Kodiak to Anchorage to Delta to Fairbanks. This is an opportunity to ensure our military families do not have to endure additional hardships while a family member is defending our country. With Congress' reauthorization of the Child Nutrition programs and Senator Bennett's legislation, there is an opportunity to ensure equitable treatment for our students in Alaska.

Please contact me if you have additional questions regarding these issues or as questions arise during the Reauthorization process. You may contact me at (907) 452-2000 x332 or arouse@northstar.k12.ak.us Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,


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