



Alaska State Legislature

1976

Source:

HJR 72

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 72

Relating to the Food Stamp Program.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, has given notice in the Federal Register of proposed amendments to the regulations governing the Food Stamp Program (7 CFR 271); and

WHEREAS the threshold question of an applicant's eligibility for the program, as well as the purchase price of the stamps, is proposed to be calculated on the income earned by the applicant in the three months before the making of application instead of the present practice of calculating eligibility and purchase price on the applicant's anticipated income; and

WHEREAS the only employment available to many potential participants in the Food Stamp Program is seasonal, leaving them without an earned income for the remainder of the year; and

WHEREAS any requirement that the applicant's eligibility or the purchase price of the applicant's stamps be calculated on the applicant's earned income in the last 90 days would be unresponsive to the true financial status of an applicant who applies within 90 days of termination of seasonal employment and thereby would be inequitable to the applicant; and

WHEREAS, in addition, it is proposed to replace the present procedure of itemizing deductions in calculating an applicant's eligibility and the purchase price of an applicant's stamps with a standard deduction of \$125 for each household; and

WHEREAS those expenses which are now itemized cannot be fairly reflected in a standard deduction due to the wide variation in the number of persons residing in a single household in the rural areas of Alaska, the difference in the cost of living between the urban and rural areas of Alaska, seasonal and geographic variations in the cost of heating fuels, and wide variation in the housing expenses of applicants; and

WHEREAS the present system wherein the stamp purchase price as a percentage of income is reflective of both the size of the applicant's household and the size of his income is proposed to be replaced with a stamp price determined as 30 per cent of income after deductions, regardless of the size of the applicant's income and household; and

WHEREAS fixing the stamp purchase price at 30 per cent of the applicant's income after subtraction of the proposed standard deduction would aggravate the unreality which would be created if the standard deduction is implemented; and

WHEREAS, apart from the issue of the amount the applicant is required to pay for the stamps, requiring the applicant to put forth money for the stamps is often infeasible in the rural areas of Alaska due to the long delays -- three to four weeks, sometimes two months -- between the time the recipient mails in his purchase money and the time the recipient receives the stamps, leaving the participant without the use of his money in the interim; and

WHEREAS it is proposed that standards which limit eligibility for the Food Stamp Program to those nonassistance households receiving below prescribed maximum levels of income shall be the income poverty guidelines prescribed by the Office of Management and Budget under sec. 625 of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, as amended; and

WHEREAS those guidelines fail to adequately take into account the higher cost of living in rural Alaska, and their use would result in the exclusion from the program of households justifiably eligible; and

WHEREAS it is proposed that each household receiving stamps be required, as a prerequisite to continued eligibility for the program, to report each month whether or not changes affecting eligibility and the basis of stamp issuance have occurred, within ten days of a specified date; and

WHEREAS, due to infrequent mail service or mail service which is frequently interrupted by inclement weather, it would be impossible for participants in Alaska residing in rural areas to report on a prior month's changes within ten days of a reporting date; and

WHEREAS it is proposed that each applicant not only register for work, as is presently required, but also that each applicant inquire regularly about employment with prospective employers; and

WHEREAS, except during the summertime, employment opportunities are nonexistent in the rural areas where many potential participants of the Food Stamp Program in Alaska reside, making compliance with such a requirement a futile exercise; and

WHEREAS the proposed regulations would require a food stamp recipient, as a condition of maintaining his eligibility for the program, to incur the considerable expense involved in traveling outside the locality in which he resides to interview for jobs referred to that recipient by a state or federal employment office, even though other proposed regulations would permit a recipient to refuse an offer of employment located outside the locality of his residence; and

WHEREAS the proposed regulations would tighten the accountability of state agencies and issuing agents for stamps issued and cash received in the course of food stamp purchases; and

WHEREAS the necessary effect of these proposed administrative changes would be further centralization of the eligibility and purchase procedures, further compounding the communication and transportation difficulties which have hampered the administration of the Food Stamp Program in Alaska since its incipience;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the Secretary of Agriculture, through the Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service, to not adopt the proposed regulations which would effect the above-mentioned changes in program administration, add a requirement that the recipient actively look for a job, require the recipient to report on his eligibility status every month whether or not any changes in his situation have in fact occurred, determine eligibility on guidelines which do not reflect the cost of living in Alaska, standardize the purchase price at 30 per cent of the recipient's adjusted gross income and the recipient deduction, regardless of expenses, at \$125, and define income as that earned in the 90 days before application, although the Legislature finds that a definition of income based on the income earned in the last 30 days would be acceptable; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of Agriculture develop a regionalized cost-of-living index for eligibility determination, purchase price, and stamp allotment which would reflect differences in the cost of living throughout the nation, including Alaska; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary eliminate the requirement that recipients pay out money for stamps, and lower the amount of stamps issued accordingly.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Earl Butz, Secretary, Department of Agriculture; the Honorable Edward J. Hekman, Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service, Department of Agriculture; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Mike Gravel, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.