

Introduced: 4/30/76
Referred: Health, Education
& Social Services

1 IN THE HOUSE

BY THE RULES COMMITTEE

2 HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 72

3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4 NINTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

5 Relating to the Food Stamp Program.

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

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

10 WHEREAS the threshold question of an applicant's eligibility for the
11 program, as well as the purchase price of the stamps, is proposed to be cal-
12 culated on the income earned by the applicant in the three months before the
13 making of application instead of the present practice of calculating eligi-
14 bility and purchase price on the applicant's anticipated income; and

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

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

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

27 WHEREAS those expenses which are now itemized cannot be fairly reflected
28 in a standard deduction due to the wide variation in the number of persons
29 residing in a single household in the rural areas of Alaska, the difference

1 in the cost of living between the urban and rural areas of Alaska, seasonal
2 and geographic variations in the cost of heating fuels, and wide variation in
3 the housing expenses of applicants; and

4 WHEREAS the present system wherein the stamp purchase price as a percent-
5 age of income is reflective of both the size of the applicant's household and
6 the size of his income is proposed to be replaced with a stamp price deter-
7 mined as 30 per cent of income after deductions, regardless of the size of
8 the applicant's income and household; and

9 WHEREAS fixing the stamp purchase price at 30 per cent of the appli-
10 cant's income after subtraction of the proposed standard deduction would
11 aggravate the unreality which would be created if the standard deduction is
12 implemented; and

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

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

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

27 WHEREAS it is proposed that each household receiving stamps be required,
28 as a prerequisite to continued eligibility for the program, to report each
29 month whether or not changes affecting eligibility and the basis of stamp

1 issuance have occurred, within ten days of a specified date; and

2 WHEREAS, due to infrequent mail service or mail service which is fre-
3 quently interrupted by inclement weather, it would be impossible for parti-
4 cipants in Alaska residing in rural areas to report on a prior month's
5 changes within ten days of a reporting date; and

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

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

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

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

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

28 BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests
29 the Secretary of Agriculture, through the Administrator, Food and Nutrition

1 Service, to not adopt the proposed regulations which would effect the above-
2 mentioned changes in program administration, add a requirement that the re-
3 cipient actively look for a job, require the recipient to report on his
4 eligibility status every month whether or not any changes in his situation
5 have in fact occurred, determine eligibility on guidelines which do not
6 reflect the cost of living in Alaska, standardize the purchase price at 30
7 per cent of the recipient's adjusted gross income and the recipient deduc-
8 tion, regardless of expenses, at \$125, and define income as that earned in
9 the 90 days before application, although the Legislature finds that a defini-
10 tion of income based on the income earned in the last 30 days would be
11 acceptable; and be it

12 FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of Agriculture develop a regional-
13 ized cost-of-living index for eligibility determination, purchase price, and
14 stamp allotment which would reflect differences in the cost of living through-
15 out the nation, including Alaska; and be it

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

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