

## **Coburn Amendment 1001 – Rename Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) back to Food Stamp Program, and the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act back to the Food Stamp Act.**

Almost \$80 billion will be spent this year to provide over 46 million Americans with federal financial assistances in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP; previously known as “food stamps”).<sup>1</sup> With so many families struggling financially, this support can ensure many children who otherwise might go to bed hungry have healthy meals.

In the 2008 Farm Bill, Congress renamed the Food Stamp Program to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and made a name change to the underlying legislative bill governing food stamps. Given spending patterns and eligible purchases in the program, though, SNAP is anything but nutritious for recipients or the country as a whole.

Instead of misleading the public as to its benefits, SNAP should be renamed its original title, the Food Stamp Program. This name and the place it has in American society is also a reminder of the core goal of the program: to serve our nation’s most vulnerable. Deviating from this goal hurts those who need temporary assistance the most.

### **Shore up the integrity of food stamps program by reverting to original name.**

The core mission of the food stamps program has eroded in the last decade, and a return to the original name could help shore up its goals. While expanding the program’s reach is noble, doing so undermines the faith of the American people in the program. The number of participants in the food stamps program is now at a record high 46.6 million individuals

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<sup>1</sup> Randy Alison Aussenberg, “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): A Primer on Eligibility and Benefits,” *Congressional Research Service*, January 9, 2013; R42505.

every month. In the last ten years alone, program participation has jumped from a monthly average of 21.3 million.<sup>2</sup>

This point was not lost on the editors of USA Today, who argued in an editorial last year that “restoring faith in the mission” who be helped by strengthening program requirements.<sup>3</sup>

Restoring the original name of the food stamps program would revitalize the mission of the program as targeting the food needs of our nation’s most vulnerable citizens.

### **A significant portion of SNAP funding goes toward junk food, which is not nutrition assistance.**

Energy drinks, candy bars, sodas, ice cream, potato chips, and cookies are all eligible foods under program guidelines. Few would qualify these goods as “nutritional assistance.”

In fact, more than \$2 billion of beverages sweetened with sugar are purchased with food stamps ever year, according to a study by the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity.<sup>4</sup> “Fifty-eight percent of all refreshment beverages purchased by SNAP participants were for sugar-sweetened beverages,” including soda and sports drinks.<sup>5</sup> By some estimates, the amount spent on sugary beverages may be even higher.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Data from the Food and Nutrition Service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/SNAPsummary.htm>, accessed May 20, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> “Editorial: Food stamps increases driven by politics,” *USA Today*, July 4, 2012. Available online at <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/editorials/story/2012-07-04/SNAP-farm-bill-food-stamps/56020262/1>, accessed May 20, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> “Federal food program pays billions for sugar-sweetened beverages,” Yale University website, September 17, 2012, <http://news.yale.edu/2012/09/17/federal-food-program-pays-billions-sugar-sweetened-beverages>, accessed September 25, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> “Federal food program pays billions for sugar-sweetened beverages,” Yale University website, September 17, 2012, <http://news.yale.edu/2012/09/17/federal-food-program-pays-billions-sugar-sweetened-beverages>, accessed September 25, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> “Should Taxpayers Subsidize Soda?” Center for Science in the Public Interest, July 15, 2010. Available at <http://cspinet.org/new/201007151.html>, accessed May 20, 2013.

In addition, SNAP dollars have been used to subsidize meals at fast food chains like KFC, Taco Bell, and Pizza Hut.<sup>7</sup> Purchases at luxury coffee chains like Starbucks have also qualified for SNAP in some states, as long as recipients purchase cold drinks instead of hot ones.<sup>8</sup>

Rather than misleading the public about the health benefits of the program, SNAP's name should return to "food stamps."

Additionally, the name would be a constant reminder about the mission of the program: not to subsidize junk food purchases, but to provide essential items children and families need, like staple foods of bread, meat, beans, fruits and vegetables.

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<sup>7</sup> "Where Can I Use CalFresh (Food Stamps)?" City and County of San Francisco website, <http://www.sfhsa.org/156.htm>, accessed May 21, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Brand, Natalie. "FOX 12 Investigators: Food stamps used for Frappuccinos," KPTV-Fox12, November 30, 2011. Available at <http://www.kptv.com/story/16160615/fox-12-investigators-find-food-stamps-used-for>, accessed September 24, 2012.