

2003 State Legislative Agenda

Invest in Healthier School Meals for our Children

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► Issue

The passage of SB19 in 2001 signaled agreement among California's legislators and Governor Davis that school environments can and should play a role in addressing the state epidemic of childhood obesity, just as they help address childhood hunger. The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) serve 2.7 million and 900,000 California children, respectively, each day. They provide one-third (NSLP) and one-fourth (SBP) of a child's dietary RDA. These programs assure all children access to nutritious food—children who eat school meals consume more nutrients (including calcium) and less sugar than non-participants. Starting in 2004, SB19 will strengthen nutritional standards in elementary schools and eliminate meal-time sodas in middle schools—so long as the Legislature and Governor follow through on the trigger mechanism they established within SB19 and allocate 10 cents more per school meal as part of this year's budget.

► Need

Thirty-two percent of California children ages 9 and 10 are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight. Overweight in childhood is associated with future obesity and an increased risk of serious conditions including type II diabetes, hypertension and atherosclerosis. Only 21% of elementary school students eat the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Yet state funding for the school lunch and breakfast programs has lost substantial value over time, failing to keep pace with the Consumer Price Index (CPI). With 5.1 million Californians suffering from food insecurity, California must contribute its share to supporting school meal programs that feed hungry children and help them learn.

► Request

Invest in Healthier School Meals for our ChildrenApproximately \$30 million
Provide full funding for SB19, to increase state funding for school meals by 10 cents per meal. Eliminate competitive foods and sodas from elementary schools and limit soda sales at middle schools.

► History

California's commitment to addressing the obesity epidemic led to the passage of SB19 in 2001. Supporters of SB19 included the American Heart Association, California PTA, Western Growers Association and the California Teachers Association. In the 1990s, the USDA created new standards for school meals, and the nation's schools have succeeded in meeting targets for calcium, iron and key vitamins. They have also made important strides towards meeting the USDA's fat content standards: in seven years, schools have decreased the fat content of lunches to within 10% of the target. While nutrition standards have improved, participation rates have also increased by 10% between 1995-2000.

► Outcomes

- Increases state funding for school meals by 10 cents per meal to help make up for lost value.
- Eliminates sodas and non-USDA approved meals from elementary schools to improve children's intake of important nutrients.
- Eliminates sodas from middle schools during meal times to increase consumption of water, low-fat milk and other healthy drinks.