

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 30, 2008

The Honorable Ed Schafer  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Schafer,

We are writing to express our concern regarding the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) interim rule updating the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program to include more fruits and vegetables. While we strongly support including more healthy and nutritious fruits and vegetables in the WIC program, we are concerned by the exclusion of white potatoes in the new regulation.

We understand that white potatoes have been excluded on the basis of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, *WIC Food Packages: Time for a Change*. While the IOM included many positive comments on the importance of expanding WIC to include fruits and vegetables, it recommended white potatoes be excluded from WIC despite the fact that they are an excellent source of potassium, fiber, vitamin C, and many B vitamins. The IOM made this recommendation on their basis that "most Americans do not need encouragement to consume the maximum recommendation of one serving of potatoes per day."

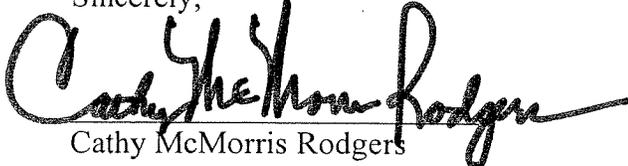
We find this recommendation troubling because it is in sharp contradiction to the report's nutritional findings. In fact, the report specifically states that: "Priority nutrients identified as lacking in the diets of young children are vitamin E, fiber, and potassium... Nutrients with more moderate but still high levels of inadequacy are vitamins A, C, and B6." It is inconsistent that the USDA has excluded from the final WIC package a vegetable that contains at least four of the vitamins that are inadequate in the American diet.

The WIC program is meant to assist low-income and nutritionally at-risk pregnant and breastfeeding women and their infants and children -- individuals who often already face significant hurdles to ensure a balanced, healthy diet for themselves and their children. We are concerned that by excluding only white potatoes from the WIC package, this rule will create confusion on the part of participants, which may drive these individuals to other, less-healthy options.

Additionally, excluding potatoes will only create administrative burdens for participating grocers and vendors. It is an unnecessary logistical complexity for all who use the WIC program – participants, grocers and vendors.

We also wish to draw your attention to the support included in the recently passed 2008 Farm Bill for “the inclusion of all fruits and vegetables in the federal nutrition programs where supported by science.” Potatoes provide an affordable and nutritious option for many WIC participants. We therefore ask that you reconsider your decision and include white potatoes as part of a final rule updating the WIC program.

Sincerely,



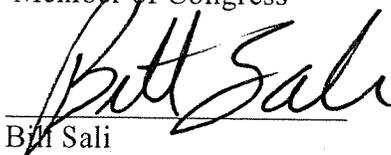
Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Member of Congress



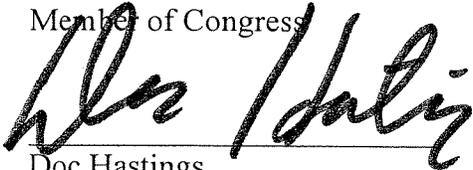
Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress



Mike Michaud  
Member of Congress



Bill Sali  
Member of Congress



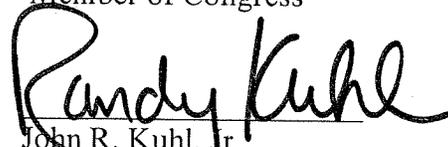
Doc Hastings  
Member of Congress



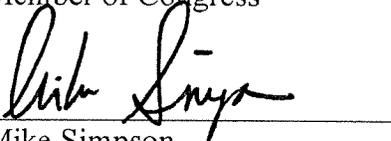
Tim Holden  
Member of Congress



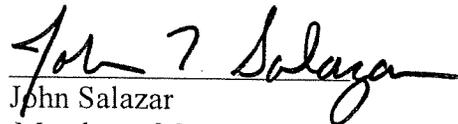
Doug Lamborn  
Member of Congress



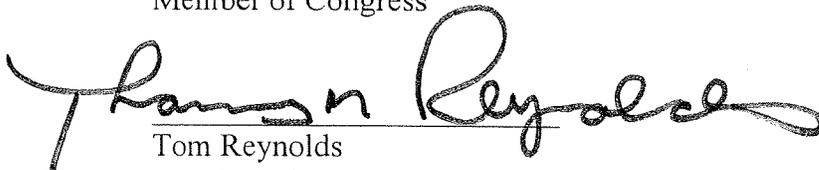
John R. Kuhl, Jr.  
Member of Congress



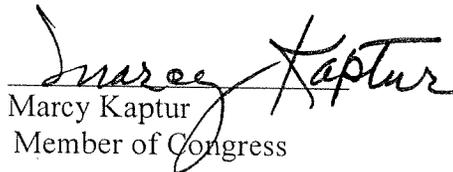
Mike Simpson  
Member of Congress



John Salazar  
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Tom Reynolds  
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Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress



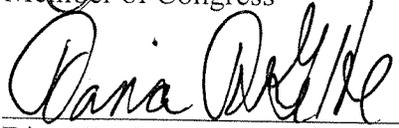
Marilyn Musgrave  
Member of Congress



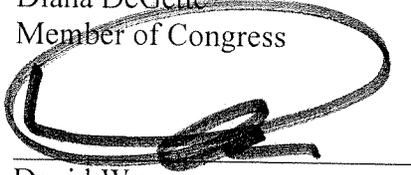
Dave Reichert  
Member of Congress



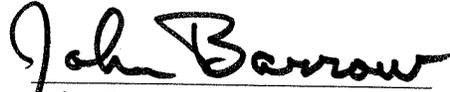
Maurice Hinchey  
Member of Congress



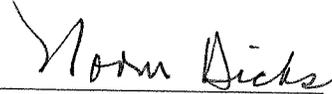
Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress



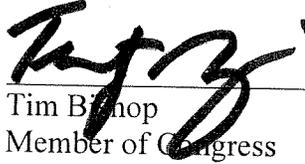
David Wu  
Member of Congress



John Barrow  
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Norm Dicks  
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Tim Bishop  
Member of Congress



Denny Rehberg  
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Fred Upton  
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