

Agriculture Secretary calls for strengthening NSLP standards

By

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U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack urged Congress yesterday to “get back to work” and expand the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, without specifying what regulations he’d like to see changed.

"This is an important opportunity for the country to reinforce the good work that was done in 2010 [with the passage of the Act], to expand on it, to solidify it, to institutionalize it, and to strengthen it," Vilsack said during a keynote address yesterday at the Center for American Progress.

He went on to say that the nation has to see “nutrition in the same way that we see so many other issues,” like the economy, national security and healthcare, because it is just as important. Vilsack noted that 76 percent of America’s teachers see students coming to school hungry.

“I know that I don't perform well when I'm hungry, and the reality is, neither do children,” Vilsack said. “If we are going to expect our children to be at their best in terms of educational achievement, we have to make sure they're well-fed at schools.”

The bottom line is that the standards are being embraced and are making a difference, he added. “And given an opportunity to work over a long period of time, they will result in healthier youngsters, better achievement in school, a stronger economy, and more young people to draw from for public service, military, and other opportunities that national service can provide.”

Vilsack’s remarks come as Congress prepares to [reauthorize](#) the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, which expires Sept. 30.

Recent coverage on the school-nutrition standards has been mixed: A survey from the [W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#) indicated that 86 percent of Americans support the current school-lunch standards, while a [new report](#) from the School Nutrition Association found that the updated standards have caused hundreds of U.S. school districts to enact layoffs and reduce hours for foodservice staff.

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