



Position Paper Food Stamp Vitamin and Mineral Improvement Act, S. 770

- Issue:** Vitamin and mineral supplements are proven to have many health benefits that are especially relevant to low-income Americans. To help improve nutrition among this population, NNFA supports S. 770, the Food Stamp Vitamin and Mineral Improvement Act, which was introduced by **Senator Tom Harkin** (D-Iowa) on March 6, 2007. This legislation would allow recipients of food stamps to purchase vitamin and mineral supplements with their benefits.
- Background:** The USDA issued a report in 1999 evaluating the impact of allowing consumers to use food stamps to purchase vitamins and mineral supplements. The report confirmed that the population as a whole has nutrient gaps that supplements could fill. The report also confirmed that the average price of a multivitamin is less than a dime a day. For a mother and two children each using a multivitamin, the total cost is estimated to be a mere 17 cents a day, or \$5.20 a month. As of the end of 2001, the average amount of the food stamp benefit was \$75 per person, per month.
- S. 770 would give these needy recipients the choice of purchasing vitamin and mineral supplements with their benefits, in the same way they are free to make other dietary choices. These supplements could improve appetite and growth rates in poor children; decrease infectious disease in the elderly; prevent neural tube birth defects; protect against heart disease and stroke; protect against some cancers; maintain cognitive function in the elderly; and build bone mass in the young and decrease bone loss in the old.
- Action Requested:** Support the Food Stamp Vitamin and Mineral Improvement Act, S. 770, so that foods and dietary supplements with approved health claims can receive the same tax treatment as other products that maintain health and prevent illness.