

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 16

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 62

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 16—Relative to nutrition.

[Filed with Secretary of State June 19, 2003.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 16, Nation. Nutrition: vegetarian school lunches.

This measure would urge the State Departments of Education and Health Services to develop nutritionally sound school lunch menu plans that would provide daily optional plant-centered vegetarian school lunches and would state that nutrition educational materials and instruction should include information about multicultural eating patterns and vegetarian/vegan eating patterns.

The measure would also request the State Departments of Education and Health Services to make a report to the Legislature by January 1, 2008.

WHEREAS, The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Cancer Society, the American Dietetic Association, the American Diabetes Association, the American Heart Association, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the National Institutes of Health recommend that there be greater emphasis in the American diet on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes with a reduction in consumption of animal foods, which are generally higher in saturated fat and cholesterol; and

WHEREAS, Recent studies indicate that more than one-quarter of California children are overweight or obese and therefore at higher risk of developing health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, asthma, and cancer; and

WHEREAS, Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes are generally lower in fat and calories than meat and dairy products, contain no cholesterol, and promote good health because they contain fiber and essential nutrients, including vitamins and minerals, and they also contain phytochemicals and antioxidants that may provide additional protection to reduce the risk of some forms of cancer, heart disease, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other degenerative diseases; and

WHEREAS, A significant percentage of children who rely on free or reduced price school lunches are considered “at risk” for these diet-related degenerative diseases; and



WHEREAS, Diet-related diseases take a disproportionate toll among ethnic minorities and ethnic minorities also have dramatically higher rates of lactose intolerance than their Caucasian peers; and

WHEREAS, A growing number of California school children either identify themselves as vegetarian or vegan, come from vegetarian or vegan families, or come from families who avoid meat and dairy foods for religious or health reasons; and

WHEREAS, Exposure of plant-centered entrees in the school cafeteria will positively influence children with poor eating habits; and

WHEREAS, Children who are considered “at risk” for diet-related diseases, children with poor eating habits, children whose religion avoids animal foods, children who are vegetarian/vegan, and children with dairy allergies are at a disadvantage if no plant-centered school lunch meal is offered daily in their respective schools; and

WHEREAS, The American Dietetic Association has stated that it is their position that appropriately planned vegetarian diets are healthy and nutritionally adequate and that scientific data suggest positive relationships between vegetarian diets and risk reduction for several chronic degenerative diseases and conditions, including obesity, coronary artery disease, hypertension, diabetes mellitus, and some types of cancer; and

WHEREAS, The State Department of Health Services is striving to increase public awareness of the importance of eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day with studies indicating the vast majority of children do not eat the Recommended Daily Allowance for these foods; and

WHEREAS, Increased consumption of locally grown fruits and vegetables promotes a sustainable environment; and

WHEREAS, Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes are available through the USDA commodities program; and

WHEREAS, The USDA has made available a newer school lunch menu planning option called “Nutrient Standard Menu Planning,” which does not require a meat or meat alternate component, and which is based on the recognition that most nutrients may be obtained from a variety of foods and allows for significantly greater flexibility in menu planning; and

WHEREAS, The USDA 1995 School Meals Initiative suggests that school lunch programs, in order to provide variety and encourage consumption and participation, should, whenever possible, offer a selection of menu items and foods from which pupils may make choices; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the State Departments of Education and Health



Services are urged to develop nutritionally sound school lunch menu plans that would provide daily optional plant-centered vegetarian school lunches, prepared without meat or dairy products, in such a way that all pupils are assured nutritionally balanced diets, regardless of their food preferences and avoidances, and the plans be voluntarily phased in over a period of approximately 4 years; and be it further

Resolved, That the optional plant-centered school lunch entrees be developed with a similar standard for variety, cycle of repeat, and availability as meat and dairy options; and be it further

Resolved, That nutrition educational materials and instruction strive to recognize and include information about multicultural eating patterns including vegetarian/vegan eating patterns; and be it further

Resolved, That the State Departments of Education and Health Services are requested to report to the Legislature by January 1, 2008, on efforts and progress made to offer optional vegetarian school lunches; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the Director of Health Services, the President of the State Board of Education, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

