

105TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2447

To require the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with the heads of other agencies, to conduct a feasibility and cost-benefit study of options for the design, development, implementation, and operation of a national database to track participation in Federal means-tested public assistance programs.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 8 (legislative day, AUGUST 31), 1998

Mr. LUGAR introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Governmental Affairs

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with the heads of other agencies, to conduct a feasibility and cost-benefit study of options for the design, development, implementation, and operation of a national database to track participation in Federal means-tested public assistance programs.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress finds that—

5 (1) during 1997, the Federal Government spent
6 over \$21,000,000,000 to deliver food stamp benefits

1 under the Food Stamp Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 2011
2 et seq.) to over 23,000,000 individuals;

3 (2) a portion of the funds spent on food stamp
4 benefits annually is misspent through overpayments
5 and fraud, which undermines the integrity and con-
6 fidence in the food stamp program;

7 (3) the Comptroller General of the United
8 States has found that—

9 (A) as many as 20,000 individuals were re-
10 ceiving food stamp benefits in at least 2 to 4
11 States at the same time during 1996;

12 (B) due to this duplication, overpayments
13 to the households in those States during 1996
14 totaled approximately \$3,900,000; and

15 (C) there was a similar duplication of pay-
16 ments in other Federal means-tested public as-
17 sistance programs, such as the temporary as-
18 sistance to needy families (TANF) program
19 funded under part A of title IV of the Social
20 Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.);

21 (4) certain States currently have cooperative
22 agreements under which matches of recipients of
23 means-tested public assistance programs are tracked
24 and coordinated with neighboring States, but there

1 is no comprehensive national database or information system to track participation across State lines;

2
3 (5) the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Public Law
4 104–193) created a number of requirements to track
5 means-tested assistance throughout the United
6 States, including time-limited receipt of assistance
7 under the food stamp program and the temporary
8 assistance to needy families (TANF) program;

9
10 (6) a centralized database would be the most effective tool to prevent receipt of means-tested assistance in multiple jurisdictions and would avoid duplicated effort on the part of States;

11
12 (7) according to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, improved mechanisms to
13 provide accurate information to employees who determine eligibility for means-tested assistance would
14 help prevent overpayments and improve service to
15 clients; and

16
17 (8) data sharing at the time of application for
18 means-tested assistance could change enforcement
19 efforts from a pay-and-chase method to a method
20 that would be more proactive and efficient.

1 **SEC. 2. STUDY ON NATIONAL DATABASE FOR FEDERAL**
2 **MEANS-TESTED PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PRO-**
3 **GRAMS.**

4 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of Agriculture, in
5 consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human
6 Services, the Secretary of Labor, the Commissioner of So-
7 cial Security, and the Secretary of the Treasury, shall con-
8 duct a feasibility and cost-benefit study of options for the
9 design, development, implementation, and operation of a
10 national database to track participation in Federal means-
11 tested public assistance programs.

12 (b) **ADMINISTRATION.**—In conducting the study, the
13 Secretary of Agriculture shall—

14 (1) study an option under which information in
15 the national database is collected and made available
16 in real-time; and

17 (2) provide safeguards to protect against the
18 unauthorized use or disclosure of information in the
19 national database.

20 (c) **REPORT.**—Not later than 180 days after the date
21 of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall
22 submit to Congress a report on the results of the study
23 conducted under this section.

1 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
2 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
3 \$250,000.

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