

111TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 2297

To require the President to call a White House Conference on Food and Nutrition.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 7, 2009

Mr. MCGOVERN (for himself and Mrs. EMERSON) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committee on Rules, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To require the President to call a White House Conference on Food and Nutrition.

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. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “The White House Con-  
5       ference on Food and Nutrition”.

6       **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7       The Congress finds the following:

8               (1) Hunger and undernutrition are political  
9       conditions that can be solved.

1           (2) Access to healthy food and good nutrition  
2 should be a fundamental right of all Americans.

3           (3) Nearly 40 years have passed since the  
4 United States convened a White House conference to  
5 comprehensively address the issues of food, hunger,  
6 health, and nutrition in America.

7           (4) More than 35,500,000 Americans live in  
8 households that face a constant struggle against  
9 hunger, 12,600,000 of whom are children and  
10 5,000,000 of whom are seniors, the disabled, and the  
11 critically ill.

12           (5) The Government spends more than  
13 \$55,000,000,000 every year responding to the con-  
14 current epidemics of hunger and undernutrition, yet  
15 the number of Americans facing hunger continues to  
16 grow and our Nation's nutritional health is declin-  
17 ing.

18           (6) Conservative cost estimates show that the  
19 true cost of hunger and illness related to undernutri-  
20 tion in America is at least \$90,000,000,000 a year,  
21 more than half of which is paid by Medicare and  
22 Medicaid.

23           (7) Appropriate food and nutrition can save the  
24 United States billions of dollars in health care costs  
25 by preventing or delaying the progression to late-

1 stage disease for tens of millions of Americans who  
2 live with chronic diseases, such as diabetes, HIV,  
3 AIDS, and heart disease. The costs of the effects  
4 and treatments of those diseases are significantly ex-  
5 acerbated by hunger, food insecurity, and under-  
6 nutrition.

7 (8) A national discussion of the root causes of  
8 hunger, food insecurity, and undernutrition, as well  
9 as identification of solutions to these epidemics, can  
10 lead to action to implement such solutions and to  
11 end hunger in America.

12 **SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF THE CONFERENCE.**

13 (a) **AUTHORITY TO CALL CONFERENCE.**—Not later  
14 than December 31, 2010, the President shall call the  
15 White House Conference on Food and Nutrition (in this  
16 Act referred to as the “Conference”) to be convened not  
17 later than 18 months after the selection of the Policy Com-  
18 mittee established in section 4, in order to make funda-  
19 mental policy recommendations on ways to end hunger  
20 and to improve nutrition in the United States and to im-  
21 plement the purposes set forth in subsection (c).

22 (b) **PLANNING AND DIRECTION.**—The Secretary of  
23 Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Agriculture,  
24 and the Secretary of the Treasury (in this Act referred

1 to as the “Cochairs”) shall plan, conduct, and convene the  
2 Conference, in consultation with the Surgeon General.

3 (c) PURPOSES OF THE CONFERENCE.—The purposes  
4 of the Conference are to—

5 (1) identify viable solutions for ending hunger  
6 in the United States;

7 (2) review the current structure, scope, and ef-  
8 fectiveness of existing legislation and programs at  
9 the Federal, State, and local levels that provide for  
10 the nutritional needs of food-insecure people living in  
11 the United States;

12 (3) determine the extent to which current Fed-  
13 eral, State, and local programs that provide for the  
14 nutritional health of Americans can better use avail-  
15 able resources and ensure greater coordination  
16 among such programs;

17 (4) identify new ways to utilize the abundant  
18 agricultural resources of the United States to meet  
19 the nutritional needs of all Americans;

20 (5) highlight emerging and innovative programs  
21 from the public and private sectors, including com-  
22 munity-based and faith-based organizations that ef-  
23 fectively address the nutrition needs of vulnerable  
24 Americans and recommend such programs as can be  
25 reasonably and cost-effectively replicated;

1           (6) identify opportunities for effective partner-  
2           ships between the Government, industry, labor,  
3           healthcare, and the nonprofit sectors to fight hunger  
4           in the United States;

5           (7) explore the possibility of creating a Federal  
6           office within the Department of Agriculture to over-  
7           see the Nation's response to persistent and wide-  
8           spread hunger and food insecurity, to include the  
9           oversight and coordination of all Federal, State, and  
10          local antihunger programs;

11          (8) bring public attention to the more than  
12          35,500,000 people living in the United States that  
13          face a constant struggle against hunger, food insecu-  
14          rity, and inadequate nutrition;

15          (9) illustrate the medical, developmental, and  
16          educational impact of hunger, food insecurity, and  
17          inadequate nutrition, and the potential savings to  
18          the United States health care system, educational  
19          system, and other sectors when appropriate food is  
20          available to the critically and chronically ill;

21          (10) build understanding of the true cost of  
22          hunger in the United States, to include lost wages,  
23          diminished stamina, reduced capacity to learn, and  
24          the impact of despair; and

1           (11) build understanding that the ever-bur-  
2           geoning dual epidemic of hunger and undernutrition  
3           is a matter of national security.

4 **SEC. 4. POLICY COMMITTEE; RELATED COMMITTEES.**

5           (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than June 30,  
6 2009, there is established a Policy Committee comprising  
7 of 17 members to be selected as follows:

8           (1) PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTEES.—Nine mem-  
9           bers shall be selected by the President and shall in-  
10          clude—

11                   (A) 3 members who are officers or employ-  
12                   ees of the United States, including the Surgeon  
13                   General; and

14                   (B) 6 members with experience in address-  
15                   ing the needs of food-insecure and undernour-  
16                   ished people in the United States.

17          (2) HOUSE APPOINTEES.—

18                   (A) Two members shall be selected by the  
19                   Speaker of the House of Representatives after  
20                   consultation with the chairperson of the Com-  
21                   mittee on Education and Labor, the chair-  
22                   person of the Committee on Ways and Means,  
23                   and the chairperson of the Committee on Agri-  
24                   culture, of the House of Representatives.

1 (B) Two members shall be selected by the  
2 minority leader of the House of Representa-  
3 tives, after consultation with the ranking minor-  
4 ity members of such committees.

5 (3) SENATE APPOINTEES.—

6 (A) Two members shall be selected by the  
7 majority leader of the Senate, after consultation  
8 with members of the Committee on Health,  
9 Education, Labor, and Pensions, the Committee  
10 on Agriculture, and the Committee on Finance,  
11 of the Senate.

12 (B) Two members shall be selected by the  
13 minority leader of the Senate, after consultation  
14 with members of such committees.

15 (b) VOTING; CHAIRPERSON.—

16 (1) The Policy Committee shall act by the vote  
17 of a majority of the members present. A quorum of  
18 Committee members shall not be required to conduct  
19 Committee business.

20 (2) The Surgeon General shall serve as the  
21 chairperson of the Policy Committee. The chair-  
22 person may vote only to break a tie vote of the other  
23 members of the Policy Committee.

24 (c) DUTIES OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE.—The Pol-  
25 icy Committee shall initially meet at the call of the Co-

1 chairs, not later than 30 days after the last member is  
2 selected under subsection (a). Subsequent meetings of the  
3 Policy Committee shall be held at the call of the chair-  
4 person. Through meetings, hearings, and working ses-  
5 sions, the Policy Committee shall—

6           (1) make recommendations to the Cochairs to  
7           facilitate the timely convening of the Conference;

8           (2) submit to the Cochairs a proposed agenda  
9           for the Conference not later than 90 days after the  
10          first meeting of the Policy Committee;

11          (3) make recommendations for the delegates of  
12          the Conference;

13          (4) establish the number of delegates to be se-  
14          lected under section 5; and

15          (5) establish an executive committee consisting  
16          of 3 members of the Policy Committee to work with  
17          delegates of the Conference.

18 **SEC. 5. CONFERENCE DELEGATES.**

19          To carry out the purposes of the Conference, the Co-  
20          chairs shall bring together delegates representative of the  
21          spectrum of thought in the field of food and nutrition,  
22          without regard to political affiliation or past partisan ac-  
23          tivity, who shall include—

24                (1) representatives of Federal, State, and local  
25                governments;

1           (2) professional people and laypeople who are  
2           working in the field of food, health, nutrition, and  
3           economic security; and

4           (3) representatives of the general public who  
5           are affected by hunger in the United States.

6 **SEC. 6. CONFERENCE ADMINISTRATION.**

7           (a) ADMINISTRATION.—In administering this section,  
8           the Cochairs shall—

9           (1) provide written notice to all members of the  
10           Policy Committee of each meeting, hearing, or work-  
11           ing session of such Committee not later than 48  
12           hours before the occurrence of such meeting, hear-  
13           ing, or working session;

14           (2) request the cooperation and assistance of  
15           the heads of such other Federal departments and  
16           agencies as may be appropriate, including the detail-  
17           ing of personnel;

18           (3) make available for public comment a pro-  
19           posed agenda prepared by the Policy Committee,  
20           which will reflect to the greatest extent possible the  
21           major issues facing the field of food and nutrition  
22           consistent with the purposes of the Conference set  
23           forth in section 3(c);

1           (4) prepare and make available background ma-  
2           terials that the Cochairs deem necessary for the use  
3           of delegates to the Conference; and

4           (5) employ such additional personnel as may be  
5           necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act  
6           without regard to provisions of title 5, United States  
7           Code, governing appointments in the competitive  
8           service, and without regard to chapter 51 and sub-  
9           chapter III of chapter 53 of such title relating to  
10          classification and General Schedule pay rates.

11          (b) DUTIES.—In carrying out the Cochairs’s respon-  
12          sibilities and functions under this section, the Cochairs  
13          shall ensure that—

14                (1) the proposed agenda prepared under sub-  
15                section (a)(3) is published in the Federal Register  
16                not later than 30 days after such agenda is approved  
17                by the Policy Committee;

18                (2) the personnel employed under subsection  
19                (a)(5) are fairly balanced in terms of points of views  
20                represented and are appointed without regard to po-  
21                litical affiliation or previous partisan activities;

22                (3) the recommendations of the Conference are  
23                not inappropriately influenced by any public official  
24                or by any special interest, but instead are the result

1 of the independent and collective judgment of the  
2 delegates of the Conference; and

3 (4) before the Conference is convened—

4 (A) current and adequate statistical data  
5 (including decennial census data) and other in-  
6 formation on food and nutrition in the United  
7 States; and

8 (B) such information as may be necessary  
9 to evaluate Federal programs and policies relat-  
10 ing to food and nutrition;

11 which the Cochairs may obtain by making grants to  
12 or entering into an agreement with, public agencies  
13 or nonprofit organizations, are readily available in  
14 advance of the Conference to the delegates.

15 (c) GIFTS.—The Cochairs may accept, on behalf of  
16 the United States, gifts (in cash or in kind, including vol-  
17 untary and uncompensated services), which shall be avail-  
18 able to carry out this Act. Gifts of cash shall be available  
19 in addition to amounts appropriated to carry out this title.  
20 Gifts may be earmarked by the donor or the executive  
21 committee for a specific purpose.

22 (d) RECORDS.—The Cochairs shall maintain records  
23 regarding—

24 (1) the sources, amounts, and uses of gifts ac-  
25 cepted under subsection (c); and

1           (2) the identity of each person receiving assist-  
2           ance to carry out this Act, and the amount of such  
3           assistance received by each such person.

4 **SEC. 7. REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE.**

5           (a) PRELIMINARY REPORT.—Not later than 100 days  
6 after the Conference adjourns, the Policy Committee shall  
7 prepare a preliminary report on the Conference which  
8 shall be published in the Federal Register and submitted  
9 to the chief executive officers of the States. The Policy  
10 Committee shall request that the chief executive officers  
11 of the States submit to the Policy Committee, not later  
12 than 45 days after receiving such report, their views and  
13 findings on such report.

14           (b) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 6 months after  
15 the date on which the Conference adjourns, the Policy  
16 Committee shall—

17           (1) prepare a final report of the Conference  
18           which shall include a compilation of the views and  
19           findings of the chief executive officers of the States  
20           received under subsection (a); and

21           (2) publish in the Federal Register, and trans-  
22           mit to the President and to Congress, the rec-  
23           ommendations for the administrative action and the  
24           legislation necessary to implement the recommenda-  
25           tions contained in such report.

1 **SEC. 8. STATUS REPORTS.**

2 (a) INITIAL STATUS REPORT.—Not later than 2  
3 years after the date on which the Conference adjourns,  
4 the Surgeon General shall—

5 (1) prepare a status report documenting the im-  
6 plementation of the recommendations contained in  
7 the final report described in section 7(b)(1); and

8 (2) publish in the Federal Register, and trans-  
9 mit to the President and to Congress, such status  
10 report.

11 (b) SUBSEQUENT STATUS REPORTS.—Not later than  
12 5 years after the date on which the Conference adjourns,  
13 and every 5 years thereafter until all recommendations in  
14 the final report described in section 7(b)(1) are achieved,  
15 the Comptroller General shall—

16 (1) prepare a status report documenting the im-  
17 plementation of the recommendations contained in  
18 such final report; and

19 (2) publish in the Federal Register, and trans-  
20 mit to the President and to Congress, such status  
21 report.

22 **SEC. 9. COMMITTEE HEARINGS.**

23 (a) HEARINGS ON REPORTS.—The Committee on Ag-  
24 riculture of the House of Representatives and the Com-  
25 mittee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Sen-  
26 ate shall each hold hearings on the recommendations and

1 status reports received by Congress under sections  
2 7(b)(2), 8(a)(2), and 8(b)(2);

3 (b) HEARINGS ON STATUS OF HUNGER.—The Com-  
4 mittee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives and  
5 the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of  
6 the Senate shall each hold annual hearings on the status  
7 of hunger and food insecurity in the United States;

8 (c) EXERCISE OF RULEMAKING AUTHORITY.—Sub-  
9 sections (a) and (b) are enacted—

10 (1) as an exercise of the rulemaking power of  
11 the House of Representatives and Senate, and, as  
12 such, they shall be considered as part of the rules  
13 of the House or Senate (as the case may be), and  
14 such rules shall supersede any other rule of the  
15 House or Senate only to the extent that rule is in-  
16 consistent therewith; and

17 (2) with full recognition of the constitutional  
18 right of either House to change such rules (so far  
19 as relating to the procedure in such House) at any  
20 time, in the same manner, and to the same extent  
21 as in the case of any other rule of the House or Sen-  
22 ate.

23 **SEC. 10. DEFINITION OF STATE.**

24 For the purposes of this Act, the term “State” means  
25 any of the several States, the District of Columbia, the

1 Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa,  
2 the Virgin Islands of the United States, or the Common-  
3 wealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

4 **SEC. 11. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

5 (a) AUTHORIZATION.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be  
7 appropriated to carry out this Act—

8 (A) such sums as may be necessary for the  
9 first fiscal year in which the Policy Committee  
10 plans the Conference and for the following fis-  
11 cal year; and

12 (B) such sums as may be necessary for the  
13 fiscal year in which the Conference is held.

14 (2) LIMITATION.—Any new spending authority  
15 or new authority to enter into contracts under this  
16 Act, and under which the United States is obligated  
17 to make outlays, shall be effective only to the extent,  
18 and in such amounts, as are provided in advance in  
19 appropriation Acts.

20 (b) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in para-  
22 graph (3), funds appropriated to carry out this Act  
23 and funds received as gifts under section 6(c) shall  
24 remain available for obligation or expenditure until

1 the expiration of the 1-year period beginning on the  
2 date the Conference adjourns.

3 (2) UNOBLIGATED FUNDS.—Except as provided  
4 in paragraph (3), any such funds neither expended  
5 nor obligated before the expiration of the 1-year pe-  
6 riod beginning on the date the Conference adjourns  
7 shall be returned to the United States Treasury.

8 (3) CONFERENCE NOT CONVENED.—If the Con-  
9 ference is not convened before December 31, 2010,  
10 a trust fund shall be established and such funds  
11 shall only be available for a future Conference on  
12 Food and Nutrition.

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