



**CALIFORNIA
SCHOOL NUTRITION
ASSOCIATION**

2010 CSNA LEGISLATIVE ACTION CONFERENCE

**SCHOOL MEAL REIMBURSEMENT
POSITION STATEMENT**

In 1946, Congress passed the National School Lunch Act as a “*measure of national security, to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation’s children and to encourage the domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural commodities.*” This remains the purpose of the Act today.

We encourage Legislators to make the critical needs of the more than 4.4 million children who are served meals in California schools every day a high priority. The economy has adversely impacted child nutrition programs in several ways. Low and middle income working parents are finding it difficult to stretch their household food budgets, resulting in **schools serving 11% more meals for free or at a reduced price over the last two years.** Escalating food costs have made it even more difficult for child nutrition program administrators to implement not only the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, but also the additional menu requirements imposed by the California Legislature. Therefore, **the California School Nutrition Association urges legislation to adequately fund the child nutrition program** and take the following action:

- **Appropriate an additional \$9.2 million for school meal reimbursement in California to prevent schools from running short of funds beginning in Spring 2010.** The request is not for a rate increase, but for merely maintaining the current statutory funding level of meal reimbursement throughout the year. Failure to appropriate the necessary funds for this program will compromise access to school meals for California’s children.

For each free and reduced-price lunch served, the Federal government provides \$2.68 and \$2.28 respectively. In 2007, Senate bill (SB) 80 set the state meal reimbursement rate for all free and reduced price meals at \$0.2195, and tied state meal reimbursement to meeting certain nutrition standards.. However, this rate was reduced to \$0.022 for June 2008 because meal participation exceeded the appropriation cap for 2007-08. **This year will be even worse with the California Department of Education projecting a rate reduction to less than \$0.01 for June 2010. The State reimbursement is supposed to offset the state meal mandate as well as the increased cost to food service due to enhanced nutrition standards in California.**

Justification: Proper nutrition helps students remain alert during the school day. School nutrition programs help educate our students about sound nutrition and lifelong healthy eating habits. **CSNA supports the nutrition goals set by the Legislature, but meeting these goals is difficult, at best, without adequate funding.** The current structure of State reimbursements undermines both the State’s support for State nutrition standards as well as effective business practices for school nutrition programs, which is a barrier to their goal of serving as partners in education.

Position: In order to avoid these problems in the future, a regular entitlement should be implemented, rather than a capped appropriation.