

Coburn Amendment 1005 - To reduce the administrative waste within food assistance programs due overlap and duplication, and apply the savings to provide assistance to individuals and families through domestic food assistance programs that have shown to be effective.

In the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) 2011 duplication report, GAO found the federal government operated 18 domestic food and nutrition assistance programs costing over \$62.5 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2008. In addition, only 7 of the 18 programs have shown "positive health and nutrition outcomes consistent with programs' goals."¹ Sadly, the prevalence of food insecurity rose to nearly 15 percent of the population, or about 17 million households in 2008. The inefficient, overlapping, and duplicative maze of food assistance programs fails to meet the needs of those who truly need assistance while wasting taxpayer dollars on inefficient and duplicative bureaucracies.

This amendment would streamline the federal food assistance efforts by requiring the agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs, and consolidate overlapping and duplicative functions between programs and agencies. The savings from consolidating the programs would be applied to the food assistance programs that have shown to be effective. The amendment also ensures, in consolidating programs, the eligibility, benefits, and services provided to existing participants are not interrupted or reduced.

Background on duplication and GAO's recommendations

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers 15 of the programs, including the five largest. In addition 2 programs are operated by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration on Aging, and 1 program is within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). While GAO has detailed 18 domestic food assistance programs, this may not be an exhaustive list of all federal domestic food assistance efforts because the

¹ GAO-10-346, "Domestic Food Assistance: Complex System Benefits Millions, but Additional Efforts Could Address Potential Inefficiency and Overlap among Smaller Programs," Government Accountability Office, April 2010, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/310/303151.pdf>.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has many sub-programs, some are very small programs, and in the case of the Nutrition Information and Awareness Pilot Program, one program has never been funded.

GAO found signs of overlap and inefficient use of resources within the 18 programs it identified, and found that some of the programs provide “comparable benefits to similar or overlapping populations.” Specifically, groups eligible for groceries through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program may also qualify for groceries through the Emergency Food Assistance Program, and SNAP.

These programs “often require applicants who seek assistance from multiple programs to submit separate applications for each program and provide similar information verifying, for example, household income. This can create unnecessary work for both providers and applicants and may result in the use of more administrative resources than needed.”²

In its 2011 report, GAO recommended two actions for USDA to address the duplication including “identify[ing] and develop[ing] methods for addressing potential inefficiencies and reducing unnecessary overlap among its smaller food assistance programs while ensuring that those who are eligible receive the assistance they need.”³ USDA has not taken any executive actions to address GAO’s recommendations.

Evaluation of program effectiveness

For 11 of the 18 programs GAO identified, there was not enough research to determine whether or not the programs were effective. This amendment requires the appropriate agencies to evaluate the following 10 programs and report to Congress:

Child and adult care food program

² GAO-11-318SP, “Opportunities to Reduce Potential Duplication in Government Programs, Save Tax Dollars, and Enhance Revenue,” Government Accountability Office, March 2011, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d11318sp.pdf>.

³ “Social Services: Domestic Food Assistance,” Government Accountability Action Tracker, http://www.gao.gov/duplication/action_tracker/1733#t=1.

Community food projects competitive grant program
Emergency food and shelter national board program
Grants to American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian
Organizations for Nutrition and Supportive Services
Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
Summer Food Service Program
The Emergency Food Assistance Program
WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

In addition, the appropriate agencies are required to report to Congress whether any of these programs should be consolidated or eliminated, as well as legislative reforms needed to improve the effectiveness of programs failing to produce positive results.

Program consolidations

This amendment eliminates the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) and moves any incomplete or ongoing projects to the appropriate programs under USDA. "In fiscal years 2007, 2008, and 2009, USDA proposed eliminating the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, which targets low-income pregnant women, children, and persons age 60 or over, but Congress continued to fund the program. USDA viewed this program as duplicative of other programs, and eliminating the program would have yielded close to \$140 million savings in fiscal year 2008."⁴ In FY 2012, the program was funded at \$177 million⁵ and duplicates other programs such as SNAP, Grants to Native Americans, and the Home Delivered Nutrition Program for seniors.

This amendment also eliminates the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and moves any non-duplicative function to the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program. Both of these programs provide grants to

⁴ GAO-11-318SP, "Opportunities to Reduce Potential Duplication in Government Programs, Save Tax Dollars, and Enhance Revenue," Government Accountability Office, March 2011, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d11318sp.pdf>.

⁵ R42353, "Domestic Food Assistance: Summary of Programs," Congressional Research Service, January 3, 2013, <http://crs.gov/pages/Reports.aspx?PRODCODE=R42353&Source=search>.

participating states to offer vouchers/coupons/EBT to low-income participants that may be used in farmers' markets, roadside stands, and other approved venues to purchase fresh produce. These programs provide nearly identical assistance to women, children, and seniors and should be combined and consolidated to reduce administrative and overhead costs.

All of the cost savings from these eliminations and consolidations are directed towards providing food assistance through programs that have proven to be effective.

This amendment also directs USDA to coordinate with the HHS Administration on Aging to identify and address fragmentation, overlap, and duplication between the programs providing food assistance services on Indian Reservations, as well as report to Congress on any legislative changes required to further eliminate, consolidate, or streamline the duplication and overlap within food assistance programs.