

STATUS:

J3971 LAVALLE

Resolutions, Legislative

TITLE...Requesting that local school districts provide optional vegetarian school entrees, as well as nutrition education materials and instruction

03/24/04 ADOPTED

BILL TEXT:

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION encouraging local school districts to provide optional vegetarian school entrees and encourage nutrition education materials and instruction to include information about healthy multi-cultural and vegetarian eating options.

WHEREAS, The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, and the National Institutes of Health make the following recommendations in their "Unified Dietary Guidelines": choose most of what you eat from plant sources; eat a variety of foods; eat five or more servings of fruit and vegetables each day; eat six or more servings of bread, pasta, and cereal grains each day; eat high-fat foods sparingly, especially those from animal sources; keep your intake of simple sugars to a minimum; the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans agree with these statements; and

WHEREAS, Recent studies indicate that about one-half of New York City children and more than one-quarter of New York State children are overweight or obese and New York State children have a higher obesity rate than the national average, and therefore are at higher risk of developing health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, asthma, and cancer; and

WHEREAS, Diets high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes are generally lower in fat and calories than other foods and 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 provide additional protection to reduce the risk of some forms of cancer, heart disease, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other diet related chronic diseases; and

WHEREAS, A significant percentage of all children, especially those from minority populations, are considered "at risk" for diet-related degenerative diseases; and

WHEREAS, All children will benefit by having access to vegetarian (vegan) options; and

WHEREAS, A growing number of New York 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, health or ethical reasons and may not have access to school meal entrees that meet their requirements; and

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

WHEREAS, The American Dietetic Association 2003 Position Paper on

Vegetarian Diets states that "well-planned vegan and other types of vegetarian diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including during pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, and adolescence; vegetarian diets offer a number of nutritional benefits, including lower levels of saturated fat, cholesterol, and animal protein as well as higher levels of carbohydrates, fiber, magnesium, potassium, folate, and antioxidants such as vitamins C and E and phytochemicals; vegetarians have been reported to have lower body mass index than nonvegetarians, as well as lower rates of death from ischemic heart disease; vegetarians also show lower blood cholesterol levels, lower blood pressure, and lower rates of hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and prostate and colon cancer; although a number of federally funded and institutional feeding programs can accommodate vegetarians, few have foods suitable for vegans at this time"; and

WHEREAS, The New York State Department of Health 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 New York State agriculture and a sustainable environment; and

WHEREAS, Children may purchase a la carte foods or foods and beverages from vending machines, and can not choose healthy vegetarian (vegan) options if they are not made available; and

WHEREAS, Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes are available through the USDA commodities program but are underutilized or unavailable to many schools; and

WHEREAS, Research has shown that children will choose healthy items when nutrition education is provided, at a much higher rate than those who do not have such education; and

WHEREAS, The USDA has made available a school lunch menu planning system called "Nutrient Standard Menu Planning," which does not require a meat 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's "Food Based" menu planning system requires that children choose three of five components, including: meat or meat alternate which can include beans and nuts), grain, two fruits or vegetables, and milk, and therefore, does not exclude vegetarian (vegan) entrees; and

WHEREAS, The USDA 1995 School Meals Initiative suggests that school food 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; and

WHEREAS, The USDA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or religion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to encourage local school districts, with the support of the appropriate state agencies, including the state departments of Education, Health, Agriculture and Markets, and the Office of General Services, to provide nutritionally sound

school lunch menu plans that would allow for appetizing daily optional plant-centered vegetarian (vegan) school entrees, in such a way that pupils who need to or desire to avoid dairy, egg and meat products, are assured nutritionally balanced diets, and these menu plans are phased in over a period of approximately four years; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the optional plant-centered vegetarian (vegan) school entrees be developed and provided with a similar standard for variety, cycle of repeat, and availability as meat and dairy options; and be it further

RESOLVED, That schools are encouraged to participate in the New York State farm-to-school program by purchasing foods from local farms including organic where possible; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Office of General Services should request the USDA to make available a greater variety of fresh and frozen produce, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds through the commodities program; and be it further

RESOLVED, That schools be encouraged to provide healthy vegetarian (vegan) high nutrient, low calorie options in vending machines and as a la carte items and encourage children to choose them and work to eliminate, in a manner that does not negatively impact staffing, sodas, candies, deep fried snack foods, and other snacks and beverages that are low nutrient, and high in fat, sugar or sodium; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Commissioner of the State Education Department for distribution to school food service directors, and to the Executive Director of the New York State School Food Service Association.

Document can be found at: www.senate.state.ny.us