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February 22, 2012

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
Department of Agriculture
Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 200-A
Washington DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

Idaho school children drink more weekly servings of milk at school than any other state. Unfortunately, most school-age children across the country are drinking less milk, especially when they reach middle school, junior high and high school. This trend is greatly concerning.

Before you implement any additional regulations that would impact the availability of milk in Idaho schools and across the nation, we ask you to consider recent survey research on school milk trends^[1]. Currently, kids have many beverage choices in the marketplace and schools. Not surprisingly, as these options increase, school milk consumption decreases. While many schools have trended towards fewer varieties of milk offerings, these same cafeterias are filling their coolers and vending machines with more sports drinks, flavored waters, fruit drinks and diet beverages. Though these beverages may be marginally lower in calories, they are incomparable to milk in terms of nutritional value.

In Idaho, we are proud to say that we have 100 milk and dairy vending machines in schools across the state that stock a variety of dairy products. Some of these machines stock plain and flavored milks -- including larger 16 ounce sizes for older kids -- while others include a variety of dairy products, such as cheese sticks and drinkable yogurts. But again, Idaho bucks the national trends that show schools are offering fewer flavors and sizes of milk and offering fewer vending machines that include milk and dairy products.

We do not want federal regulations in Idaho that will limit our milk and dairy consumption in schools. As such, we respectfully request that you consider the

^[1] MilkPEP, 2010-2011 Annual School Channel Survey.

following recommendations while implementing the a la carte requirements in the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act:

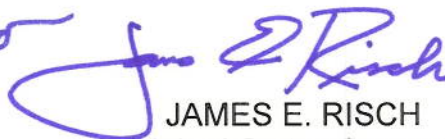
- Allow low fat and non-fat milk, flavored and plain, consistent with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and recommended by the Institute of Medicine.
- Allow a variety of serving sizes for a la carte milk, both inside the cafeteria and in vending machines found throughout schools.
- Allow yogurt, single serving cheeses and other dairy products consistent with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans that recommend 3 cups per day of fat free or low fat milk and milk products for adults and children ages 9 to 18. Encourage reduced fat and lower sodium options consistent with the Dietary Guidelines. Naturally nutrient rich foods such as dairy products should not be subjected to standards that lead to decreased consumption of dairy products.

Thank you for your consideration of policies that have helped Idaho children continue to enjoy milk and dairy in their schools. Kids like, and drink, low fat flavored milk. The recent limitation on low fat flavored milk in the final reimbursable school meal rule put milk at a considerable disadvantage relative to competing beverages in schools, and we hope you will correct this situation in the yet to be proposed a la carte rule.

Sincerely,



MIKE CRAPO
United States Senator



JAMES E. RISCH
United States Senator



MIKE SIMPSON
Member of Congress



RAÚL LABRADOR
Member of Congress