

**NEBRASKA TAXPAYERS FOR FREEDOM ISSUE PAPER:
FREE LUNCH FOR ALL SOCIALISM.**

BACKGROUND. There are people who say that there is no such thing as a free lunch. However, one NE state senator wants to give free breakfasts *and* lunches to *all* school children, no matter their family income. The Biden Regime is encouraging local school districts to offer free meals to all students but providing only part of the necessary funding. Passing such legislation here would create several problems, especially placing an additional burden on state taxpayers.

THE BILL. **LB 99**, sponsored by leftist State Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh, would offer free breakfasts and lunches to all NE public school students. State taxpayers would reimburse the schools for meal costs not reimbursed by the federal school breakfast, lunch, or summer meals program. The Legislative Fiscal Analyst pegs state costs at \$55,179,521 plus \$40,000 of federal funding. School districts no longer having a requirement to collect financial information from the parent or guardian of a student to determine eligibility for free or reduced breakfasts or lunches or for other services provided by the school district.

WHOSE OBLIGATION. The taxpayers of NE should not feed children whose parents easily can afford to pay for school meals. It is the fiscal responsibility of these parents. Besides, parents cannot control the eating habits of their kids eating school lunches, if they wish to focus on a preferred balanced diet.



NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES. A U. of Michigan study showed that students who eat hot school lunches more likely to become overweight and obese and suffer from high levels of bad cholesterol compared to kids who bring lunches from home. Such poor nutrition can cause cognitive problems in children. Despite USDA updating school lunch guidelines, many health experts decry the serving of French Fries and pizza and the lack of restrictions on how many servings students can eat. Because many schools offer several lunch options, kids tend to select the lesser nutritious foods that they like and neglect the healthier varieties. One school assistant superintendent for business services voiced an increasing sentiment by

suggesting that a "slow addiction" to the universal free lunches has arisen, with more families dependent on this new government entitlement.

WASTE. Because some kids dislike what their school serves for lunch, they dump their food. A PMC study found an estimated \$1.2 billion worth of school food wasted annually. If free school meals for all passes, waste will continue to increase. A Cambridge U. Press study supports this finding, that food waste in U.S. public schools is substantial in magnitude and cost. In the Waukesha School District in Wisconsin, all high school students received free breakfasts as they entered school. Much of this food tossed into the trash.

THE COST. According to the USDA School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study, the federal school meal program operates at a loss. This study discovered that the reported cost of offering school meals exceeds the federal reimbursement allotted for these meals, so local taxpayers must bear the brunt of cost.¹ Liberal states like Maine and Massachusetts have used additional state tax \$\$ to fund lunch for all; Colorado levies a new tax on the wealthy to fund its lunch for all program. Proponents there boasted that they were forcing the rich folks to buy the Colorado kids lunches. The Independence Institute, a Colorado think tank, provided a study showing that kids who qualified for free meals already were getting them. National Public Radio reported that the USDA has spent \$30 billion since 2020 on school meals for all, \$11 billion more than it would have spent on its income-based school lunch program.² The USDA estimates food prices about 10% higher than last year and will increase an additional 6% this year, further burdening local taxpayers.

SCANDAL. After you open the spigot and remove general guidelines to make a program easier to administer, it is easier to commit fraud and steal money. One Minnesota vendor, Feeding our Future, now accused of redirecting \$250 million meant to feed all kids free meals into private pockets. 50 individuals now charged with federal crimes.³ The vendor

¹ Noah Webster Educational Foundation, Nov. 22, 2021.

² NPR, [End of nationwide federal free lunch program has some states scrambling](#), Oct. 26, 2022.

³ Peter Callaghan, Minnesota Post, Dec. 12, 2022.

Safari Restaurant claimed to serve meals to 5,000 school kids daily. FBI search warrants revealed that most of the money used to pay for million-dollar homes and expensive vehicles and consumer goods.⁴



TAKE ACTION NOW. Leftist Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh wants to stick NE taxpayers with an additional government entitlement program that will require increased tax subsidies annually. Her bill would offer free meals to children whose parents easily can afford to either pack a sack lunch or pay for a school lunch for their kids. And school meals are not extremely healthy. If your state senator is on the Education Committee, use the information above to lobby him/her to kill **LB 99** in committee. If the bill advances out of committee, lobby your senator to VOTE NO on the legislature floor. Email netaxpayers@gmail.com for state senator contact information and join our NTF *Education Watch Project*.

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⁴ KARE 11 Investigates: [Allegations of fraud in meals program for kids](#), 3-24-22.