



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on November 1, 2012

Republicans Demand Investigation of New School Lunch Standards

Protesting the Obama administration's "nanny-state" approach to curbing U.S. obesity, House Education and Workforce Committee Chairman John Kline (R-Minn.) is demanding a government investigation of the contentious new school lunch standards implemented this fall. The rules promote healthy foods while establishing limits on calorie intake for school lunches as a component of the 2010 [Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act](#) — the first major overhaul of school lunches in 15 years — which authorizes funding and enacts policy for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) core child nutrition programs.



"State and local officials, parents and students have raised concerns about a number of these changes," Kline [wrote](#) Wednesday to the federal government's Government Accountability Office (GAO), "specifically the adequacy of the calorie maximum, the cost of the new requirements, and increased food waste in school cafeterias."

The letter was co-signed by Reps. Kristi Noem (R-S.D.) and Phil Roe (R-Tenn.). Specifically, the lawmakers requested that the GAO investigate and report back on a number of concerns, including the cost of the new standards and whether they have encouraged students to abandon school lunch programs.

The Obama administration has met heated opposition from several Republican House members, who blasted the rules as testimony of the president's "nanny-state" efforts to curb U.S. obesity. In fact, Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa), who sits on the House Agriculture Committee, [unveiled](#) legislation to repeal the rules in September.

"For the first time in history, the USDA has set a calorie limit on school lunches," King asserted when introducing the bill. "The misguided nanny state, as advanced by Michelle Obama's 'Healthy and Hunger Free Kids Act,' was interpreted by Secretary [Tom] Vilsack to be a directive that, because some kids are overweight, he would put every child on a diet. Parents know that their kids deserve all of the healthy and nutritious food they want."

The Obama administration counters that the standards are imperative to avoid a public health crisis. "We are going full steam ahead to making sure that the school day is healthier," Agriculture Undersecretary for Food Kevin Concannon said in August. "These are the first major changes to school meals in 15 years. They are much-needed and long overdue." Michelle Obama, a chief proponent of the policy, echoed that children should get "the same kind of food we would serve at our own kitchen tables" at school.

But Congressional members and those in the White House are not the only people quarreling over the



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school lunch rules, as parents, along with the students themselves, are protesting the policy. Parents and students argue that the calorie maximums for school lunches — 650 calories for elementary-schoolers, 700 for middle-schoolers, and 850 for high-schoolers — are unreasonable, especially when considering high school athletes who burn thousands of calories just during sports practices.

The controversy only intensified after the USDA started preaching to parents, urging them to help make the healthy-food transition flow more smoothly. “We know that many parents are already making changes at home to help the whole family eat healthier,” Dr. Janey Thornton, deputy under secretary for food, nutrition, and consumer services, wrote in a [blog post](#) early last month. “We recommend reviewing school menus with kids at home and working to incorporate foods that are being served at school into family meals as much as possible.”

As *The New American* recently [reported](#), students have been some of the most vocal opponents of the policy, arguing that an insufficient lunch hinders their ability to pay attention and only makes them more tired during class:

A recent [video](#) created by a group of high school students and teachers at Wallace County High School in Kansas parodied the Obama administration’s rigid “war on obesity” program, featuring kids falling asleep during class and young athletes fainting from food deprivation.

The parody video, based on a hit song by the band “Fun,” showed zombie-eyed students staring grievously at their lunch trays, smuggling junk food into their lockers, and crawling on the floor in exhaustion. “There’s just not enough food,” [protested](#) Callahan Grund, a 16-year-old football player who was featured in the video. “When you have chores in the morning and football practice after school, you need energy. This doesn’t cut it.”

The policy has sparked outrage from all over the spectrum, with even teachers and administrators blasting the Obama administration’s approach to combating obesity. “There’s not enough stuff to fill them up,” Craig Idacavage, a principal at St. Mark’s elementary school in Kansas, [said](#) in a recent interview. “They are hungry at 2 p.m. Even the teachers are noticing kids saying they’re hungry and can’t concentrate.”



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