



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 7, 2011

Food Companies and GOP Rail Against Federal Food Guidelines

The Obama administration continues to take on the food industry, this time pressuring food companies to discontinue advertising junk food for children. Republicans have come forward in support of the companies, helping them to resist federal pressures.



The Blaze [reports](#):

Some food companies say the government is going too far with guidelines proposed earlier this year by several government agencies. The voluntary guidelines would attempt to shield children from ads for sugary and fatty foods — think colorful characters on cereal boxes — on television, in stores and on the Internet. Companies would be urged to market foods to children ages 2 through 17 only if they contain specific healthy ingredients and are low in fats, sugars and sodium.

The guidelines are currently voluntary, but some companies have expressed concerns that the federal government would retaliate against them if they did not cooperate.

Republicans may see potential for the same thing, and are working to delay the guidelines by cutting off their funding source. The GOP is looking to include a provision in the Federal Trade Commission's budget for next year that would require the government to study the potential costs and effects of the guidelines before they are implemented.

The provision was sponsored by Missouri Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (picture, above), who also indicated fears that the voluntary guidelines would eventually “lead to extraordinary pressure from the federal government.”

The spending bill that includes the delay already cleared the House Appropriations Committee last month and will now come before the full House of Representatives for a vote next week.

In addition to Emerson, a number of Republicans have pointed to the guidelines as examples of federal overreach, particularly because the guidelines address a number of food items. According to The Blaze, “The standards are meant to crack down on ads for the unhealthiest foods, but others are caught in the crossfire.”

Republican Jack Kingston said the guidelines are “basing decisions on emotions and not facts.”

It seems nothing may be exempt from the guidelines, including whole wheat breads, which may be



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subject to the guidelines because of too much sodium. Even water may run afoul of the guidelines for lacking nutrients.

Even some Democrats are having difficulty signing on to the guidelines, including North Carolina Rep. G.K. Butterfield, who, in a letter to the government agencies in charge of the effort, said the federal government “has produced no evidence that I am aware of that the proposed restrictions will serve the government’s goals of changing long-term eating habits.”

Food companies assert that the rules are simply back-door regulations which ultimately violate First Amendment rights of free speech.

Scott Faber, lobbyist for the Grocery Manufacturers Association, estimates that the new standards would affect the marketing of nearly all of the nation’s favorite foods. “What is very troubling about the administration’s proposal is that they would have us drastically change food marketing without presenting any evidence that it changes diets or assessing the costs,” he comments.

Health advocates, on the other hand, believe the guidelines to be a good idea.

Margo Wootan of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, for example, said, “The industry is exaggerating the influence of these voluntary regulations to gin up opposition. These standards are supposed to provide a model of how self-regulation can work.”

Opponents of the guidelines contend that even healthy foods would be subject to the new standards, but Wootan indicates that the guidelines still permit marketing of some questionable foods, including McDonald’s and Burger King meals, as well as sugar-coated cereals such as Frosted Mini Wheats.

Meanwhile, the Federal Trade Commission, the Agriculture Department, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control have been working to put a positive spin on the new standards.

David Vladeck, director of the FTC’s Bureau of Consumer Protection, attempted to assuage concerns by posting on the FTC website that there are no legal consequences for failing to comply with the new standards. “Nobody’s saying Toucan Sam has to fly the coop,” he wrote. “Ideally, during the next five years it would be great to see the cereal companies voluntarily tweak their formulations to raise the whole grain content and lower the added sugars for cereals marketed for children.”

Vladeck also attempted to defend the standards by asserting they are not overreach. “The proposal is designed to support — not supplant — moms and dads,” he stated.



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