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## **Press Release - Proposed Regulations on School Lunch Program**

Edmund S. Muskie

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## *MUSKIE*

*Maine*

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SEPTEMBER 16, 1971

FOR RELEASE

A.M.'s

Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) said today that the proposed regulations for the National School Lunch Program, issued by the Department of Agriculture on August 13, "pose a real threat to the continued progress of the program."

In a bi-partisan letter to the President, Muskie joined forty-four Senators in expressing deep concern that the proposed regulations reducing the federal reimbursement rate from 50¢ to 35¢ per meal may make it impossible for the states and localities to meet the requirements of the National School Lunch Program.

Muskie said "The anticipated loss to the states in the 1971 - 1972 school year is estimated in the millions of dollars. In Maine, for example, the estimated loss of revenue for free or reduced lunches for school children is \$1,326,000."

At the end of the last school year, 30% of the lunches served Maine school children were provided at a free or reduced rate. Eighty per cent of that amount was served free to needy children.

"Many Maine communities," Muskie said, "will be forced to cancel or curtail drastically the lunch program as federal reimbursement funds diminish. And the tragic result will be that some of the children who need the benefits of this program may be forced to go hungry."

In the letter to the President, the Senators requested that the proposed regulations be withdrawn and replaced with regulations that would provide a maximum reimbursement rate of 48 cents for free and reduced-rate lunches for needy children, a maximum reimbursement rate of 12 cents for general free and reduced-rate lunches, and a guaranteed reimbursement rate of 5 cents for generally assisted lunches. In addition, the Senators suggested that the regulations insure that the funds Congress makes available to the Secretary of Agriculture be fully utilized.

The letter to the President was prompted by the findings of the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, following committee hearings on the proposed regulations September 7. The letter supports the unanimous conclusion of the State Directors Section of the American School Food Service Association that the proposed regulations threaten the progress of the National School Lunch Program.