

Great Anti-Junk-Food Marketing Moments of 2008

The U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government issued report language calling for the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to convene an expert group to develop (voluntary) national nutrition standards for food marketing to children for the full range of marketing to children and investigate the agency's authority to regulate food marketing to children.



Under public pressure, Nestlé USA joined the Council of Better Business Bureaus' (CBBB) Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI). Representative Markey (D-MA) sent a letter and over 30 child and health advocacy groups signed onto a separate letter urging Nestlé USA to join the Initiative and to set nutrition standards for the foods it will and will not market to kids. In July, the company joined the CFBAI and in December it announced its policy and nutrition standards for marketing to children.

Dannon USA became the 15th company to join the Council of Better Business Bureaus' (CBBB) Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI). Campbell's and Burger King strengthened their food marketing pledge nutrition standards.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued a report to Congress reviewing industry expenditures, marketing activities, and self-regulation, finding that children are exposed to \$2 billion worth of food marketing (including fast-food toys) each year, most of which is for low-nutrition food. The FTC recommended that the industry work toward standardizing the nutrition criteria for what is allowed to be marketed to children, broaden the definition of marketing under the industry's self-regulatory program, and develop a self-regulatory track for children's media and entertainment companies.



At a September 23rd U.S. Senate hearing, held jointly by Appropriations Subcommittees on Financial Services and General Government and Labor Health and Human Services, the Nickelodeon representative scrambled to defend the company's reluctance to set nutrition standards for its character licensing, as other children's media/entertainment companies already have done. Lawmakers made it clear that they will be watching closely self-regulatory efforts.

McDonald's ended its advertising on report cards in Seminole County, Florida, after nearly two-thousand parents complained. The report cards promised a free Happy Meal to students with good grades, behavior, or attendance.



A bill to limit the marketing of food on school campuses, introduced by Assembly Member Jose Solorio (D-69), passed out of the California State Assembly Committee on Education. The bill did not make it through the appropriations process but it signaled strong interest in the issue of food marketing in schools.

More than 80 individuals representing local, state, and national child advocacy and health organizations participated in the food marketing work group, a national network for sharing information and advocating for policies to reduce junk-food marketing.

And here's to more progress on reducing junk-food marketing in 2009, including:

- Passing national legislation to get soda and junk food out of school by updating the nutrition standards for foods sold out of vending machines, a la carte lines, and school stores;
- Getting a national study of food marketing in schools;
- Getting more food companies to join the CFBAI, including: Subway, Chuck E. Cheese's, Yum! Brands, and candy makers Topps and Perfetti Van Melle; and
- Getting media/entertainment companies to put in place serious safeguards for children.

We look forward to more conference calls, joint letters, and to working together to address junk-food marketing to children in the coming year.

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