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September 18, 2013

An Open Letter to the House of Representatives: Support Nutrition Reform and Work Opportunity Act

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the R Street Institute, I write today to express our support for H.R. 3102, the Nutrition Reform and Work Opportunity Act. While we have serious concerns with the flawed process that produced it, we believe this legislation contains important structural changes and spending reductions that will help make food stamp costs more manageable.

As a free-market think tank that seeks lower costs for taxpayers, more accountability, and more effective management of important programs, R Street is encouraged by some of the key structural changes included in this legislation. By closing loopholes and strengthening work requirements, the bill will more accurately target food stamp dollars to the truly needy. These changes also combine to trim spending by roughly 5 percent from the baseline, a modest amount as the economy recovers and assistance rolls return to more normal levels. In fact, House Republicans already voted for much steeper reductions of more than 17 percent in the “Path to Prosperity” budget resolution.

However, R Street has serious reservations about the process that has led to this bill’s consideration. While we supported splitting food and farm programs into separate legislation, the House largely defeated the purpose of doing so when it passed a nearly \$200 billion “farm-only” bill under a closed rule that blocked consideration of any amendments to provide needed taxpayer protections. The other half of that equation, this food bill, does a better job of fundamental reform but will be considered without amendment. We regard it as shameful that House leaders refused to find significant savings in agribusiness handouts while easily scaring up \$40 billion in cuts to food assistance.

Despite our concerns about the broader farm bill process and the continued refusal of Republicans to sufficiently address expensive agriculture subsidies, it is our belief that H.R. 3102 is good policy that is worthy of support. We look forward to working with the House to ensure that future farm bill action is more attentive to the urgent cause of overhauling farm payments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Moylan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrew Moylan
Senior Fellow and Outreach Director
R Street Institute