

Takeaways from the Feb. 16 House Agriculture Committee hearing on “Pros and Cons of Restricting SNAP Purchases”

Support for restricting sweetened foods & beverages did not fall on party lines

Witnesses

Leslie Sarasin – CEO, Food Marketing Institute

- Does not support restrictions because of cost of program and difficulty in implementation

John Weidman – Dep. Exec. Director, The Food Trust

- Supports education programs and incentivizing healthy food options; did not opine on restricting sweets

Brian Wansink – Director, Cornell’s Food and Brand Lab

- Supports restricted SNAP purchases within the incentivized system he tested in Norway

Angela Rachidi – Research Fellow, AEI

- Supports pilot programs to research the effects of banning sweetened beverages from SNAP

Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach – Director, Brookings’ Hamilton Project

- Does not support restrictions because of implementation problems; supports greater funding for SNAP



Highlights of representatives’ questions

David Scott (D-GA13)

- Against the limiting of sweets as it would impede the “pursuit of happiness”; argues lack of exercise is main cause of obesity

Jim McGovern (D-MA02)

- Does not think the committee should be the “food police”; supports increasing SNAP benefits to increase health benefits

Doug LaMalfa (R-CA01)

- Supports effort to restrict SNAP to combat obesity epidemic
- Skeptical of arguments that say restricting sweets would be too difficult because of implementation problems

John Faso (R-NY19)

- Supports researching the removal of sodas that “add no nutritional value” from SNAP