

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUMMER FEEDING PROGRAM

June 24, 2009 - Last week you ran an editorial that misrepresented my views and the true issues surrounding the summer feeding program. We all agree on the importance of feeding children, but we differ on who should do this. I believe this duty belongs to the parents. Instead of respecting this time honored jurisdiction of the family, the summer feeding program treats families like they do not exist.

When government takes over a family function, like feeding children on a daily basis, we take a group of people who are capable and treat them like they are incapacitated. Some have a low view of parents, presuming most of them are inept and proposing governmental intervention as the only solution.

I believe most parents are good and want the blessing and privilege of feeding their children. When families are sharing a meal around the kitchen table, much more is happening. Mealtime is the primary time for shaping values and strengthening bonds. All of this is missing or diluted when it happens outside the family. Look into your own heart and ask, "What made a difference in my life as a child?" Was it standing in a line for a cafeteria style meal at school or was it sitting around the kitchen table with others in your family?

All the children being fed in this program have parents or guardians who are already functioning in a nurturing roll. They have not been judged to be neglectful or abusive in any way. Government should not take the care of their children from them. The right way to help is to treat the root cause, not the symptom. We must support the parents in providing for their children, not circumvent them.

We can go a long way to strengthening our families without any government program at all just by connecting our less fortunate families to churches and food pantries. Parents will usually feed their children before themselves. Wouldn't it be better to fix the overall problem for the family rather than use private vendors and make the children go back to an institution to eat two meals a day?

Yet to dare suggest there are alternatives for rational people to discuss and consequences of government taking over so much in people's lives is to be branded an inhuman monster in your editorial. If you truly believe there are parents who "wouldn't" feed their children breakfast or lunch during the summer, why aren't you concerned that they aren't getting dinner, may not have clean clothes, or a proper bed to sleep in? Don't you care about children? Isn't the next step under your scenario to take children away from their poor parents?

My goal is not to replace parents, but to reinforce them. The solution is found in helping those near us, not in yet another gigantic federally funded mass market approach. Bigger government invites fraud and robs people of the dignity of personal human relationships.

Perhaps the core of our differences comes from a conflict of vision. I see beauty in human potential emerging from finding local solutions to local problems. Short of a national disaster, all family problems are as local as you can get and need local solutions. Missourians have the resources and capacity to address the needs of our own residents without our national government coming in to "spare us" from our own individual problems at a tremendous cost.

My weekly Capitol Report is a way for me to have two-way communications with my constituents and not a national manifesto for you to mock, distort, and to be quoted out of context. Better education can change the plight of the poor. My sincere hope is that we can lift families out of poverty through compassionate interaction with those who can show them a better way. This is why I agreed to chair an interim committee to study poverty and why I volunteered to teach a cooking class for mothers utilizing the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program to help teach young mothers how to prepare nutritious meals. Together we can discover how to couple good intentions with sound economic policies that will create sustainable solutions that empower all of us. This is the path to helping our families flourish and move us forward as a free and virtuous society.

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