

RAHALL

Weekly Report

EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE AND COMMODITY DISTRIBUTION ACT OF 1983

● Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in strong support of H.R. 1590, the Emergency Food Assistance and Commodity Distribution Act of 1983. I would like to commend the chairman of the Subcommittee on Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations, and Nutrition, Congressman PANETTA, for presenting Congress with this most urgently needed legislation.

In my State, where unemployment is near 21 percent, there is an immediate need for an effective surplus food program, one truly responsive to the actual need facing many jobless Americans today. In one county I represent, McDowell, the documented unemployment is near 40 percent. Just the other week I personally visited a hollow where 95 percent of the residents are without a job.

Last week I was informed by the West Virginia Department of Welfare that USDA will reduce the May allocation for surplus cheese by approximately 70 percent. When my office contacted USDA we were told they had sold the program so well that demand for surplus cheese and butter now exceeds the department's ability to process the commodities. This development places States in the position of having to tell those who previously received surplus food that they will have to wait longer for the next shipment to arrive because their Government cannot process the food as quickly as it is needed. In March, West Virginia requested 669,600 pounds of surplus cheese. For April the amount originally requested was 1,339,200 pounds which was reduced to 967,200 pounds by USDA. For the month of May my State requested 1,339,200 pounds and has just been told its allotment will be reduced to 372,000 pounds—far, far less than the demand in our State.

I am pleased that your legislation is directed at correcting this problem and also would authorize the distribution of commodities other than cheese and butter. I personally feel it is a crime for this Government to purchase food commodities and store them, while thousands of Americans are going hungry. By providing funds to States, a maximum of \$65 million per fiscal year, the chairman has demonstrated his sensitivity to the problems facing our States during this recession.

In closing I would like to say this legislation will attempt to solve the problems faced by our State with regard to the distribution of surplus commodities. I want to emphasize that the logjam at this time appears to be at the processing stage where I am told by USDA officials their facilities cannot handle the quantity of processing as required by the States. I support this legislation which will make more commodities available, provide additional funds for processing, and help States distribute the food to the needy.●