

**Statement of the National WIC Association  
Before the  
Food & Nutrition Board  
Of the  
Institute of Medicine of the National Academies  
Tuesday 14 October 2014  
The Rev. Douglas A. Greenaway  
President & Chief Executive Officer**

Dr. Rasmussen, Dr. Murphy, and Members of the Committee, distinguished partners and guests, the National WIC Association is the education arm and advocacy voice of the 12,200 WIC service provider agencies and the over 8 million mothers and young children who participate in WIC. I am here to speak on their behalf.

Since the program's inception forty years ago, WIC has had an extraordinary record of consistently and successfully improving health outcomes in the population it serves. Good nutrition, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health care and social services are WIC's cornerstones. Americans, by a three to one margin in a 2012 released public opinion poll, support the WIC mission.

We are grateful to the rigorous scientific review process of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) that determined which healthy foods are included in the WIC food package.

To make sure the monthly fruit and vegetable cash value vouchers (\$10 for women and \$8 for children) are used to purchase fruits and vegetables that tend to be lacking in their diets—like leafy green, red and orange vegetables—white potatoes, as we are all aware, may not be bought. White potatoes were deemed unnecessary for supplementation by WIC because they were already the most sufficiently consumed vegetable, frequently as French fries and potato chips.

The potato industry takes issue with this and their lobbyists have pushed Congress hard to require that the white potato become a WIC food. The WIC community, public health, and anti-hunger organizations have pushed back, opposing these efforts to override the science-based process for selecting WIC foods.

Potato industry lobbyists escalated their fight over the past several years turning their focus to the use of legislation to force white potatoes into the food package. In the FY 2015 Agriculture Appropriations bill, they finally succeeded, compromising the integrity and effectiveness of WIC. Since WIC's founding, Congress has left the science to the scientists and has never until now interfered with selecting which foods WIC should provide. This intervention signals that determining a WIC food is now at Congressional discretion, potentially forcing unhealthy foods, into the food package.

The potato industry says there is new science. We are delighted that the USD A, which oversees WIC, has asked the IOM to consider the latest science in the context of your science-based review of WIC foods.

It should not be overlooked that potatoes are the leading vegetable crop in the US, and that the National Agricultural Statistics Services pegged the value of all potatoes sold in 2012 at \$3.73 billion. For WIC advocates, "potatoes" are not the issue, here. The real issue is that the potato industry and some members of Congress have circumvented the scientific review process. We cannot allow WIC's mission to be undermined by industry greed. We are depending upon the IOM to render its best scientific judgment as to what is best for WIC mothers and young children, not the potato industry.

Finally, I urge, in the words of a great first century prophet, "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things," as you deliberate and consider your recommendations. Thank you.