

This year I took the role of Ranking Minority Member on the Appropriations Agriculture Subcommittee, a position that has allowed me to advocate for our local agriculture industry and the increase access of healthy meals. Before the end of the year, Congress passed—and the President signed—the committee's appropriations bill that provides critical funding for food safety and nutrition programs

While I agree that we have an obligation to get our fiscal house in order—it is clear that we cannot do it at the expense of food safety or the health of future generations. For that reason, I used my influence on the committee to protect vital funding at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and at the Department of Agriculture that works to protect our nation's food supply.

In addition, the Appropriations Agriculture bill provides funding for school lunches that are vital in assuring our youth receive the nutrition they need to succeed. Unfortunately the bill also included language that defined tomatoe pizza paste as a serving of vegetables, and therefore reducing the quality of healthy meals served to our children. I am disappointed that this language made into this bill, but it does not signal the end to our efforts to secure healthy meals for children.

As families continue to feel the lingering effects of the worst economic down turn since the Great Depression, this bill also provides increased funding for two important nutrition programs that are helping families keep food on their tables—the Women, Infant and Children and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance programs.

As budget cuts continue to dominate politics in our Washington, I will continue to work to assure a responsible path is taken that does not endanger our food supply or place the burden on those less fortunate.

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