

SENATE VOTES TO RESTORE FOOD-STAMP BENEFITS FOR 250,000 LEGAL IMMIGRANTS

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

May 13, 1998, Wednesday, FIVE STAR LIFT EDITION

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Section: NEWS, Pg. A7

Length: 319 words

Byline: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

A quarter-million **legal immigrants** would regain **food stamp benefits** under legislation passed Tuesday by the **Senate**.

The \$ 1.9 billion bill, sent to the House on a 92-8 **vote**, also would provide financial guarantees for crop insurance and earmark money for agricultural research in what supporters said was a balance intended to appeal to both urban anti-hunger forces and farm advocates.

"This is a carefully crafted compromise," said Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa.

On a 77-23 **vote**, the **Senate** defeated an attempt by Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, to send the bill back to committee, which would have effectively killed it. Gramm, who had blocked a floor **vote** for weeks, argued that **restoring** more than \$ 818 million in **benefits** to about **250,000 legal immigrants** amounted to a full retreat from the 1996 welfare overhaul that cut them off.

"The biggest problem with this bill is it puts a great big neon sign at the border of the United States of America, 'Come and get welfare,' " Gramm said. "I want people to come to America to go to work."

But President Bill Clinton indicated that he would veto the measure without the **food stamps** provisions, and supporters stressed that farmers need the crop insurance to renew policies, which would allow them to obtain bank credit and peace of mind in case of disaster.

"There is no new entitlement here," said Sen. Dick Lugar, R-Ind., chairman of the Agriculture Committee. "This is a question of a commitment to farmers."

The **food stamp restoration** applies to only a third of the estimated 935,000 **legal immigrants** who lost **benefits** under the welfare law, but supporters said they were willing to accept that as a down payment.

Targeted are the elderly, those under 18, the disabled and people who came to the United States to flee political or religious persecution. To qualify, those **immigrants** had to be living in the United States as of Aug. 22, 1996.

Classification

Language: English

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Subject: WELFARE **BENEFITS** (89%); **FOOD STAMPS** (88%); IMMIGRATION (88%); IMMIGRATION LAW (88%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (87%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (72%); LEGISLATION (72%); PUBLIC HEALTH & WELFARE LAW (72%); VETO (72%); US DEMOCRATIC PARTY (70%); HUNGER IN SOCIETY (67%); AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (66%); RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION (60%); RELIGION (50%)

Industry: AGRICULTURAL INSURANCE (71%); AGRICULTURE (71%); AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (66%)

Person: PHIL GRAMM (71%); BILL CLINTON (52%); DICK LUGAR (51%); TOM HARKIN (51%)

Geographic: TEXAS, USA (79%); IOWA, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (94%)

Load-Date: May 14, 1998

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