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## Uncertain Future: A Brave New World?

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### When Food Is Involved, There Is No Freedom

Are we as Americans becoming more obese? Some are wondering who to blame and where to place the burden of making us a healthier nation. Per the Issues & Controversies website in their article titled *Diet and Obesity* (2013), they have found that more than one-third of American adults are obese, and more than one-third of children in the country are either overweight or obese. Being healthy and fit is everyone's concern, but not many Americans follow through with their plan. The obesity rates in adults are twice as high as it was in the 1960s and with our children it is twice as high as it was in the 1970s (Diet & Obesity). There is a controversial issue dealing with whether or not the government has a say in what we eat. Some Americans will argue the government has to step in for a change to occur, others will say leave it as is, or have companies provide healthier options. Companies like PepsiCo, are already working toward this goal. Some individuals argue that obesity in society will continue to be a problem as long as business industries continue marketing high sugar content foods. However, the government should not regulate our food because eating is an individual choice, making laws against food content takes away a sense of freedom and companies need to provide solutions instead to better this country's health by implying that the individual cannot be responsible.

Diet and nutrition is essentially an individual's responsibility not the government's. The government should have no intervention in what someone is eating due to the option of choice. For example, if I were to eat a triple meat burger with fries and a shake, I should not have

someone tell me it is unacceptable. I am aware of the nutritional damage I am adding to my body but in reality It is up to me to have a counteraction to balance the two. Americans know they need to be taking care of their body by watching their calories and exercising. Thus, the choices are available to beginning the process of healthy eating, but no one can force another individual to do something with no interest in changing.

Since the 1970s the Department of Agricultural dietary guidelines urged Americans to consume low fat diets to reduce the risk of heart diseases. Yes, Americans consumed less fat content, but since they were eating healthier they ate more. Therefore, Americans were consuming more of an overall calorie intake between 1970 to 2000 (Lankford 41). The government's job is to intervene when there is a direct threat to the nation as a whole, not if there is a problem here and there. Occasionally, the government will offer advice and suggestions regarding solutions that need to be done, just like our parents have attempted to guide us in a direction they would enjoy seeing us follow. Some will take the advice and use it as a guideline in life while others will ignore the problem and cage themselves from the situation. The same is happening with the government and the issue of food regulation. Gary Taustine, author of letter of response states, "to promote healthier lifestyles is commendable, but the government has no right whatsoever to go beyond promotion to enforcement" (Taustine 582). The government does have a say in what Americans should be eating and why, but no enforcement is necessary. The individual should willingly want to change their eating habits and exercise plan to better their health. Yes, there is a crisis involved with overeating but the ineffective way is to force someone to alter their eating with no will.

The government has a bad habit of attempting to control any, if not all, various aspects of its citizens' lives. If the government were to get involved in regulating our food, then American

individuals would be nannied by the government with no voice for themselves. America will no longer be seen as a nation of freedom if there is federal control in the food industry. Government regulation will take away freedom of this nations citizens which could potentially lead to future revolts. There have been past regulations that have been ineffective and Americans still believe our sugar intake can be seized. Lankford uses the example of Michael Bloomberg, mayor of New York, is famous for his ban on large sugar content drinks that was ineffective, and resulted in New York residents purchasing double. There will be a way around the polices enforced, but for the government to strictly enforce their laws then American citizens will suffer greatly.

Lankford, author of *Should the Government Regulate What People Eat* states in the book "Policymakers have forced restaurants to display calorie information on the assumption that informed customers would opt for lower-calorie items. Yet research suggests that most patrons ignore the information, and possibly those who actually bother to review calorie counts don't make healthier decisions as a result" (23). The government has required companies to post food calorie numbers for several years now and remains in effect, but this method is ineffective due to the increase in overweight individuals still occurring. There is no enforcement of what needs to be done to enhance our health which essentially is what seems to be working best. There is research supporting the findings regarding the government and how they cannot directly control the obesity problem. A solution the government has in mind will not work for everyone; so therefore, individuals need to decide what best fits their personal needs. What an individual eats is a self-serving responsibility issue. The government wants to be the hero and come to the rescue in all situations, but it is just not possible for controlling our food intake. The government's main concern is to reduce healthcare expenses, but diet and nutrition is far more important, especially since we tend to eat more than visit a doctor's office. The government

needs to regulate the business industries by controlling how our food is projected in the media, how much is available, and most importantly educate Americans.

Individuals lose a sense of control when it comes to eating, but they can control their behavior around diets to make it easier to eat healthier than what they are already consuming. Elementary schools need to focus on altering their food availability because children are the main age group being affected by obesity. It will be effective to provide healthy lunches in schools because children will learn to adapt to the school's available resources. Lankford uses what Japan is doing in their school systems to strengthen the need for healthy lunches, in Japan "the meals are often made from scratch, They're balanced but hearty, heavy on rice and vegetables, fish and soups... The food is grown locally and almost never frozen" (48). Children often hear the phrase "you get what you get, and you don't throw a fit," during grade school they will learn to accept what is given to them. If we can condition children to be considerate over their calorie intake and choice of food, then the odds are better for them to eat and live a healthier lifestyle as an adult. We want Americans to crave eating healthy as a necessity and see junk food as an occasional treat but not frequently.

The American diet has evolutionary changed since our grandparents were around our age, especially with the amount of resources available to us. Back then obesity wasn't a concern as it is now, but families were growing their own produce versus today where many Americans are buying processed food due to lack of resources. The environment we are in has a huge impact on the food we consume our bodies with. We cannot educate individuals to maintain a healthy lifestyle, if there is no access to a grocery store for better nutritional eating. Wehunt, author of *"The Food Desert"*, conducted research over Roseland, Chicago and their lack of resources, including a simply store to buy basic food such as broccoli. As we all know, Chicago is a busy

state with a large population we would expect access to a grocery store, but Wehunt introduces us to a food desert. In the Roseland area, an individual named Howard who is 78, has to rely on his daughter to drive him two and a half miles to Chatham, a nearby town, to even be able to step foot into a grocery store (Wehunt 2). There is a shortage on access to available meat and produce but within the Roseland area but there are plenty of fast-food restaurants. Due to the scarcity of food resources, the individuals in this area have no choice but to eat what is within their area, in this case, greasy and high saturated fast-food. Individuals in this area are having to drive twice as far for a resource that is a necessity. In the Roseland area, individuals are spending \$90 million a year on groceries outside of their community (Wehunt 5). There is no excuse as to why there can't be a grocery store coming into the area and make money to better the community. For example, Aldi is a grocery store many families go to because they provide healthy and general produce at an affordable price. If there is no or limited access to grocery stores, then how do we expect Americans to eat healthy resulting in the average weight for their age and height? Wehunt states that there has been an increase in customers from 15 million to 18 million in a month due to a new grocery store in Woodlawn; a location closer to Roseland. Companies can look into what areas are missing necessary resources to enhance their living standards and potentially benefit from the increase in income. Also, if there isn't a grocery store near a country town, then its citizens could have training in agriculture. Some individuals would rather grow their own fresh produce that could potentially lead to a small business interaction. There is a need for more education that will influence individuals to change their eating and cooking habits. The government cannot reach their goal of ending the obesity epidemic without proper education and availability of resources. Having the right education and resources available will allow Americans to learn what their body may lack and will result in a healthier society.

Although these are the three main reasons why the government shouldn't regulate food, we can also understand the reasoning behind why their intervention may be needed. Government intervention will strictly enforce individuals to change because they have no option. If Americans are changing by force, then the government will have direct control over the decreasing number in healthcare expenses. This nation's main concern is the economy and if it means to interfere with our food intake to save our spending, then so be it. The government seems to believe they hold the answers to make America a perfect nation, which is simply impossible to do. The government feels the need to regulate all American diets because they may want the final say. Some individuals will argue that they will not change unless someone is forcing them to do so. Although, instead of restricting our freedom, school systems will be altering their food options to condition children at an early age that nutritional eating can be done. Also, no town or isolated areas will have a lack of grocery store restricting their access to fresh nutritional food items. We as Americans tend to "follow the crowd" with what seems to be popular in modern society. If our peers are changing their eating habits and see results, then we will repeat the same steps.

Obesity rates are rising yes, but the blame can be scattered from individuals and the business industry. We are independently and evolutionarily altering our diets with the many fattening foods becoming available to us. Although the obesity rate is higher than in the past decades, so is the amount of sugary and fattening food that is available and more accessible than nutritional, healthy food. For this reason, our future American adults need to conditionally learn to eat healthy on their own, and have a variety of grocery stores available to prevent food deserts. Government regulation is unnecessary and will restrain our freedom by gaining all of Americas

power. Companies need to fall into the footsteps of those who are currently already working on changing the food industry, such as PepsiCo, to better this nation's health.



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