

National Food Policy Conference
Obesity - Perspectives on Causes and Solutions
2:15 pm to 3:30 pm, Thursday, May 8, 2003
National Press Club Murrow Room
14th and F Streets, NW
Washington, DC 20045

Art Jaeger, CFA: It is time for the second of our two facilitated debates today. This one will focus on two questions: what's behind the national epidemic of obesity and how should it be addressed? On one side we have probably the nation's pre-eminent consumer advocate when it comes to food. On the other we have an equally prominent representative of the food industry. Sally Squires of the *Washington Post*, who had been scheduled to moderate this session had to cancel at the last minute. But we're extremely fortunate to have as a substitute Gail Imig, program director for Food Systems and Rural Development at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Gail is an expert on just about any food related topic, including diet and health. Gail?

Gail Imig, Kellogg Foundation: Well, I'm glad to know I'm an expert on all those issues. But we have two experts here today. It's wonderful to be here. On my way here in the airplane there was a man sitting next to me; this was one of those few times I got bumped up to first class. He kept glancing over my shoulder and he said "What's this about food?" I mentioned to him that I was coming to this National Food Policy Conference. Well, that's all it took. We were in an active conversation for the next hour. It just reminded me how concerned people are about food today. Food is not a part of anything he is involved in professionally; he's a lobbyist that had nothing to do with food. And boy he just went off. And I thought, that's what it's all about. Certainly the issue of obesity, in particular, is bringing people together in new ways to look at issues about food and health. And there is a passion developing around this issue and you've seen some of that passion here today and I'm sure we'll see some more during these conversations.

This is my first time to this conference. But I'm very impressed. I'm impressed with the presentations and I'm very impressed with the participants. My compliments to Art and CFA and the planning committee for pulling together such an outstanding conference. The Kellogg Foundation sponsors a food and society conference once a year. And I've got lots of ideas about the conference we're going to think about for next year, which will have its focus on food and health. And I'll just say very quickly that the Kellogg Foundation has had a long history of working in areas of health and food, particularly agriculture and our beginnings. But our work has evolved over time and we have a major initiative called Food and Society, which fits in very nicely with the kind of issues that you are talking about here, because what we're about is access to healthy food, grown in a healthy manner, in a manner that protects the environment and contributes economically and socially to local communities and neighborhoods. We're trying to

create connections between farmers and consumers, so farmers just don't see what they are doing as producing commodities but they're producing real food for real people.

Now, to introduce this session, I think we are in for a real treat this afternoon. It's time for us to move now to two people who are very well versed in the issue of causes and solutions around obesity and issues of food. They are two people who have excellent scientific backgrounds, credibility, respect in their field, and an experience base to bring for us today excellent perspectives to inform this continuing debate and conversation. And while I will have a question or two for our two debaters today, I'd like to move quickly to questions from all of you, so I hope you'll be thinking about questions because I have learned there is a great deal of expertise in this room and I know that you'll be formulating some very good questions for these two panelists.

Susan Finn chairs the American Council for Fitness and Nutrition. She's only been there for about a month. It's a new industry-supported group that focuses on these issues of weight and obesity among Americans. She and I were visiting. We both have similar long careers. So she's had many years of experience. We started when we were young people. We started when we were two. But we've had a lot of years in our profession. She's known for building relationships, particularly relationships with industry, health organizations, government folks et cetera. And she's past president of the American Dietetic Association, has written extensively, and I think it's important to remember that she still remains connected to her academic career and holds two professorships at Ohio State University.

Michael Jacobson, Ph.D. from MIT in microbiology, is also well published in his field and has published in prestigious journals and many of us are very familiar with his work and his presentations. He's co-founder and executive director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest. It is because of his work that we have laws requiring standardized labeling on food and warning notices on alcoholic beverages. As a result of recent efforts, fast food companies have been required to disclose their ingredients and add more healthy items to their menus, and we are seeing that. And we're seeing him take a look at the deceptive food labels and ads that have been halted.

So I'm looking forward to hearing both of these people and to moving into discussions and conversations. So, Susan, I'll turn the floor over to you.

Susan Finn, ACFN: Thank you, Gail. Thank you for including me on your panel. It is delightful to be here and wonderful to see some friends I know. Gosh. And Michael, as you and I were talking, you and I have had the opportunity to work together before. When I was President of the American Dietetic Association, you and I were lobbying for health care reform proposals. All of the various proposals that were on the table, we wanted nutrition in there and you and I were actually very much in sync here on the same side of the table. And I think once again we share a goal. We both want to improve the health and well being of Americans, particularly our children. We may differ a little bit in the approach and how we get there. But bottom line is we do want the same thing.

I am very proud to represent a new organization, the American Council for Fitness and Nutrition. This is a coalition of the food and beverage industries that have come together along with other societies, professional groups, trade associations, to really participate in helping to come up with some sensible solutions to this obesity problem, solutions that really work long-term. I'm going to tell you a little bit about that.

It is not any shock to us that obesity is probably on the agenda of every health care professional association I know. Meetings like this are being held to talk about this issue and to try to identify the causes. I think it's very, very disconcerting and frightful when we begin to realize...health care professionals seeing the high incidence of Type II diabetes in children, not adults, but in children. And so it is something we must pay attention to. And we agree the important role that nutrition plays. It is critical. It must be highlighted. I think we all agree with Tommy Thompson. We've got to do something better about prevention. I've heard him say prevention is the right cause. It is the right issue and it absolutely is a wonderful time in history. It is the right time to step forward and come forward with some proposals. We can't do it alone. We've got to all work together. And that's why I'm particularly delighted to be with all of you here today because we have to have partners. It cannot be done by one group alone. It has to be all of us together. And the reasons are pretty obvious for why it has to be together. It's such a complicated issue. There is no easy fix. I think Nancy Hellmich's article today in *USA Today* reflected the fact that this is not a simple problem. This is a complicated issue, and we need many solutions.

Is it about food? A lot of food folks in here. Yeah, it's about food but, golly, it's about how we live our lives. It's about our culture. It's about our values. It's about our traditions. It's about how we live, how we spend our time. How about our neighborhoods? How they are designed, how safe they are. It's really all these things together and any solution must, to be effective, consider all of those things. Is it about food and beverages? You bet. And the food and beverage industry is very committed to this, because we need the very best minds in the country working together to solve the problem. The food and beverage companies formed this association that I'm very proud to represent today. They formed the American Council for Fitness and Nutrition, whose mission is to help Americans better understand the importance of eating well and putting more activity in their day-to-day lives. Now, you might be saying, "Okay, I've heard about the Council, what specifically are you doing? What is your agenda?" Well, you heard Gail say I've been here a month and it's been introduced a couple months before that. So we don't know everything. But we do know some very specific things that we stand for. We know that we stand for healthy balance in our lives. We know that it is a complex issue. We know we are looking for long-term solutions and we know we have to have a comprehensive strategy. We are talking about a healthy balance for life, in terms of foods we take in and the activities we perform every day and all the things around that that would influence how we live our lives.

There's two things where we're focusing on currently. We're focusing on programs in communities that work. And I'll come back to that in a moment. And we're focusing on policies, public policies that support our comprehensive, long-term strategy. Both programs are what we are focusing on currently. I'm very excited about this and I'm very excited about our focus because, as many of my friends in this room know, I've spent 30 years in business and I've been in every nook and cranny of one organization. So I've worked in R&D and marketing and in a

variety of places and I know what kinds of issues you face. And I also know the very important good works companies can do when they set their mind to it and they make a commitment. And I believe that industries today are doing just that. One of the most obvious commitments and contributions is in our R&D efforts. We can walk down the grocery store aisle and we're going to see a vast number of new products that are healthy but also taste good and that people will buy because it fits in with their lifestyle. As we all know as dieticians, if it doesn't taste good, nobody's going to buy it no matter how healthy it is. But the technological advances that have made food possible are a wonderful contribution of industry. Some of you may know because a couple of months ago this was released publicly, PepsiCo announced, "We're making a significant contribution to develop a healthy balance in our product line. We're going to invest dollars in what's called the 'better for you' or 'healthy for you' products." That's one example, I think reflecting industry commitment today. And there are more and there will be more.

Successful corporations over the years in my experience...any organization really...has a tremendous understanding of their customer. You all do if you are successful in your business. Now, this is a very valuable talent and it's wonderful expertise to have on the council. You can imagine, here we are sitting in the council together with representatives of all different companies, many are fierce competitors on the outside. But when they come around and sit around the table with the council, they are working together. They are working together to help use their talents and their expertise to make responsible statements to continue to act responsibly and to put forth suggestions of how we can better communicate and reach consumers. That's a plus and that's a step in the right direction for sure. And I must say, by the way, companies have always made commitments to nutrition. We have many good examples in our corporate headquarters today of programs that really do work and investments that companies have made. General Mills. I know you have some General Mills folks here. General Mills did a wonderful job. They partnered with the American Dietetic Association and they now have just announced yesterday 50 recipients of their \$10,000 each grant that goes to a community that helps identify real innovations in programming that reach children, a great opportunity to show some models and to begin to build some best practices in the industry. Quaker Oats. You know, parents tell us based on our survey that they want tools, they want some help, they want some guidelines. Get on Quaker Oats interactive website and you will see a wonderful program that helps parents plan healthy meals for kids. Based on not only what they need and what is healthy, but what kids like. Parents ask for that information and that's a very innovative site. Again, providing a tool for parents to plan healthy meals but also include somethings children like.

Is there more the industry can do? I guess we can answer yes to almost anything in our lives. There's always more all of us can do about everything. But certainly we're moving in the right direction. And I can honestly tell you I don't know a major company across this nation, a major food and beverage company, that is not focusing on what their role might be in the area of obesity. Is it new products? Is it different marketing strategies? Is it looking at more specific guidelines, marketing guidelines, with this increased sensitivity? Do we need to be a little tougher? Do we need to have some additional safeguards? Do we need to do additional programming? All these things are being looked at in corporations across this country. And with that, you know, we're going to see some tremendous changes.

The American Council for Fitness and Nutrition I mentioned had two major focuses. One is advocacy, advocacy for public policy programs that make sense and that fit in with our platform of healthy balance. Programs such as the Bush Administration's Healthier U.S. Initiative. Strong supporters of that. The PEP program, Physical Education for Progress, that program giving grants through the Department of Education, giving grants to educational agencies to establish physical education programs. It's pretty shocking, guys, when you think that there is only one state in our country that has required physical education in our schools from K through 12. It's the state of Illinois. That's really pretty shocking. And we go out and we ask Americans, "What do you believe about physical education in schools?" They say, "Well, it's there. It was there when I was a kid. It's got to be there now." A third of people think all schools require that. That's not the case. But nine out of 10 people say, "Boy, it better be there. And by the way, I also want some nutrition education in there as well." So families, Americans, really do believe that the schools systems have a very important role both in activity as well as in education. And we're behind those kinds of initiatives.

We're also behind the proposed IMPACT legislation --the legislation that, if introduced and passed, will authorize dollars to help develop education programs in our communities related to healthy eating and healthy activities and lifestyles. Again, that supports the long-term solutions and the comprehensive approach and we are very much as a council behind those initiatives.

We've also been conducting listening tours across our country. We have been on the West Coast. We have been up to the Northwest section of the country. We've been on the East Coast. We've been in Massachusetts. We've been up to Maine. Next month I am going to head up to New York. They've given me Buffalo as the place to go. As we said, it's not January. It's not bad. And I'm from Cleveland. So it's okay. In any event, we are looking and trying to find out what works. What really are people doing that works? And you know we're finding some great things. We find some programs that are very sophisticated. We find others that are really more grassroots but really good. And what we are doing is identifying where they are. What can we do now to share this information? What can we do to build a good roll or registry? We call it our honor roll of programs that are making a difference. And when we go out in these communities we are often bringing people together, people together that maybe don't even know in the same community that they are working on the same thing. Imagine that. We all know that happens. We're catalysts to bring those groups together. We want to a model some really good programs. That's a significant part of our initiative.

Is there anybody in here who hasn't heard of Colorado on the Move? Jim Hill's initiative in Colorado that's getting people moving? And getting people to make small changes in their lifestyles to make a difference? Two thousand extra steps a day and a 100 less calories, small changes. Small changes can make a difference in stopping that weight gain and getting people more active and in healthier lifestyles. And you know, once you start, you kind of want more and that's the principle of this as well. We find programs all around the country that have heard of this and they are adapting their own version. Because one size never fits all. The Hearts and Park Program. Hearts and Park is an initiative between the National Parks and Recreation Association, which is by the way a member of our advisory board at the council, as well as the National Institutes of Health supporting activity, supporting heart-healthy eating for children.

It is very clear that we have an obesity crisis, and it is an epidemic proportion. And there isn't anybody in this room or health professionals across the country that is not concerned about it. We all are and we know it's complex and we have to find solutions. We have to find those solutions together that are long lasting. When we ask parents, "who is responsible for your children's health?" they raise their hands and say "I'm responsible for my children's health and my children's weight. But we need some help along the way and we need it from industry, we need it from a variety of sources to help provide sensible guidelines." They get confused. You know, we have a lot of messages out there and they get confused. We need some basically sound sensible information, information that works.

Now, over my career I have worked with lots and lots of health professionals. I have talked to lots of parents. And I am a mother and I have raised a son and I know the trials and tribulations of all that. But there are a few things I really do know for sure about education and about helping people adopt healthy lifestyles. Number one is we have to focus on solutions. We cannot be distracted by all kinds of things around that don't focus on long-lasting solutions, solutions that are realistic. Secondly, I very strongly believe we've got to focus on positive messages. We do not need to make parents -- in particular, mothers specifically -- feel one more twinge of guilt. They've got quite enough. We need to make families feel positive. We need to build self-esteem. That I think is a major principle of any solution that goes forward. Thirdly, we have a strong need to make changes that are realistic and small. As Jim Hill points out, small things make a difference. And, as you know, when you have success in one thing, success breeds success. And that gets us started on the right track.

In closing I can say that there is only one other aspect that I think we have to focus on and that is the environment in our public policy areas. I very firmly believe, as does the council, that we need to really promote programs that help people make wise choices. Not restrict choices. We need to focus on nutrition education that's really long lasting, helping people adopt lifestyle patterns that will last a life for them as well as their children. And I think we do not need to focus on taxes or bans. I think we need to focus on the long-term solutions. I also think we need to focus on policies that once again get American families moving together. I think those are going to be the longest-lasting solutions and the most successful. I am very excited to be here. I'm looking forward to meeting many of you that I do not know. I'm looking forward to helping you help move this issue together, and together being a partner in helping Americans have a healthier life style. Thank you very much.

Michael Jacobson, CPSI: Congratulations, Susan, on your new position. I think we all admire your enthusiasm and appreciate your goals and support those goals of dealing with this extraordinarily serious and complex issue. And I greatly appreciate Art Jaeger's inviting me to participate in this session. You have another wonderful food policy conference, as is your habit, and the entire Consumer Federation of America.

I thought we were going to have a debate and discuss problems and what are solutions and so on. But fortunately, Christine Whitman told us what the problem was. She said that you are eating 6,000 pounds a year of food! You're actually eating more because that's 16 pounds a day. I don't

eat 16 pounds a day. Some of you are probably eating 20 or 25 pounds a day. So if we could only cut it down from 16 to I don't know what. 15? 14? We would solve that obesity problem just like that and we wouldn't have any need for these conferences or anything else. So would you join with me in petitioning EPA to cut the consumption of food? *Laughter.*

Susan alluded to the complexity of the obesity problem and it is extraordinarily complex, resulting from a multitude of causes, both on the calorie in and the calorie out side. I don't want to belabor the statistics on obesity. I think you may have heard some of them earlier today. But suffice it to say that rates of overweight and obesity have roughly doubled in the past 25 years. Well over a majority of us adults are overweight or obese. And that obesity, especially obesity, less so overweight, contributes to everything from diminished self-esteem to great difficulty in getting job to the familiar chronic diseases of cancer, diabetes, heart disease and stroke. According to the federal government, as many as several hundreds thousand people a year die prematurely because of their weight. The economic cost has been estimated to be well over \$100 billion a year. And if that's not enough to spur health officials into action, I don't know what is. Unfortunately, it apparently is not enough to spur action. Instead, it spurs hand-wringing in Congress, platitudes from top Administration officials, researchers see opportunities to boost there budgets, and we get admonitions from the food industry to walk up the stairs instead of taking the elevator.

I wouldn't say the food industry is intentionally trying to make us fat. But that is a natural consequence of its products and marketing efforts, coupled with living in a technologically advanced society where we do take the elevator, where we do ride a car almost everywhere we go, where we're afraid to go out into the streets because of crime. So we live in a sedentary society where food is shoved upon us wherever we go. You grow up, you're a kid, you're two years old, three years old, four years old, who's your icon? Ronald McDonald. You turn on the television. There's Ronald. You see candy bars ads. You see sugary breakfast cereal ads. They really should be called candies, not cereals. And fast food companies. I don't want to pick on them in particular, but they are so prominent, they not only feature the food high in calories, fat and salt but they place restaurants everywhere we go: on street corners, in shopping malls, hospitals, office buildings, and even in schools. Also in schools, thousands of schools feature Channel One, that television program that kids are required to watch for 12 minutes a day. Two of those minutes are commercials, some of them for junk foods. You won't see many broccoli ads on Channel One. And thousands of schools make money to the detriment of their students' health by selling soft drinks, potato chips and candy bars. And the unfortunate outcome is that children and adults think that normal eating is pizza, candy, hamburgers, greasy popcorn, with an occasional fruit or vegetable or grain product thrown in. And they grow fatter and their arteries begin to clog up and their teeth begin to decay and their blood pressure begins to rise.

America and Americans have a choice to make: fight obesity or accept it. Where do you think they are going to come out? Obviously, it's a lot easier to sit back and enjoy that junk and then wait for the drugs that will treat heart disease, high blood pressure and maybe eventually we'll have an effective obesity treatment drugs. And we wouldn't have to worry about anything, would we? And AstraZeneca and Merck and all those other companies will just rake in the dollars. I think we need to fight back and promote healthier diets and physical activity. And maybe you

and your organizations, especially consumer activist groups here can work in your local communities.

I'd like to spend my remaining time to mention a few specific things that can be done, starting with schools, where the society has much greater control over foods than elsewhere. States or cities can limit or ban the sale of junk foods. That's a good positive action, isn't it? You wanted positive. That's what people are doing. Several cities in California have done that. The state of California has banned soft drinks in all schools, all elementary schools, and limiting it in middle schools until after the end of the last lunch period. Good positive action. At the federal level, you can encourage your senators to amend the Child Nutrition Act, which is being reauthorized this year, to give the Department of Agriculture the authority to limit junk foods sales. Schools also need to be encouraged, probably through extra funds, to provide more fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains. If the posters don't work, maybe we could bribe the schools to give it away and some of those giveaway programs are working extremely well in increasing especially fresh fruit consumption.

We need better information on menus and labels. As Susan said, to help people make wise choices, it is very important. Give people the information. The nutrition label begins to do it and I hope you'll join us in getting the U.S. Department of Agriculture to require nutrition labels on meat, a major source of calories and saturated fat. Information. And how about getting calorie labels on alcoholic beverages? We get five or six percent of our calories from alcoholic beverages that are marketed as being filled with... romance. But they also contain calories.

Moreover, people don't just buy packaged foods in grocery stores. They eat at restaurants. Let's get a modicum of nutrition information on restaurant menus so that people can make choices based partly on nutrition. Legislatures in Maine, New York, Texas and New Hampshire so far are considering legislation that would ensure that fast food customers see the calories listed right up on the menu boards. It would say "Big Mac, 590 calories, \$2.19." Useful information. And I would bet, that when you see the calorie content of the Double Gulp, at 7-11, you will choke and maybe just chose their Regular Gulp or even just a large, which is probably the smallest that they now provide. Table service restaurants have enough room on their menus to provide not just calories but also saturated fat and sodium. And I think that chain restaurants could provide this information very easily. We wouldn't say that every mom and pop restaurant has to send its foods to the laboratory to be tested, but let's start with chain restaurants. One could go farther with labeling to help consumers make the right choices. How about special consumer alerts, little symbols on foods that contain more than a given percentage of the daily value of saturated fat? Soft drinks provide half the refined sugars that Americans consume. How about a notice on soft drinks, reminding people to limit themselves to just one, which would be a great accomplishment for many people.

And on the other hand, let's use labels to positively attract people to more nutritious foods. Sweden is doing it. They have a little keyhole symbol on foods that are lower in saturated fat, higher in whole grains, lower in salt. It's a voluntary program; the government encourages companies to use that symbol. We could do the thing there. Wouldn't it be wonderful to give your kids \$20 bucks and say, "kid, go to the store and buy anything you want. It either has to be

a fruit or a vegetable or have a little symbol, a smiling Uncle Sam or whatever, on the package.” And you can be assured that your kid will come home with \$20 worth of reasonably healthy foods.

Now, we also need educational programs and I stand shoulder to shoulder with the American Council on Fitness and Nutrition. Currently, most of the education unfortunately, comes from the junk food producers. They spend billions, tens of billions of dollars, more than \$20 billion encouraging us to eat greasy fries, garbagey cake mixes, fatty pizza, sugary soft drinks, fatty candy bars and all the other processed garbage that these companies make their living off of. It would be nice if people ate real food. You talk about having sustainable agriculture providing healthful beans and whole grains and fruits and vegetables. Unfortunately, they’ve taken the taste out of fruits. Start with a tomato, which is a fruit. Who wants to eat a tomato? Or get a peach these days. It’s hard to get one because they are shipped from California or Chile or someplace because we’ve gotten rid of local agriculture and we’ve bred foods, just like roses. We’ve bred them for appearance, not taste or fragrance in the case of roses.

It’s ridiculous that the government spends only three million dollars a year on its Five-a-Day Program to promote more consumption of fruits and vegetables. It’s a great little program. Unfortunately, it’s an invisible program. McDonald’s, one company, spends \$1 billion dollars a year pushing hamburgers, fries and cokes. The soft drink industry has spent about \$6 billion dollars over the past decade. Could you imagine spending \$6 billion encouraging people to eat something that is bad for their health? What if that had been spent on healthy foods? Well, we need Congress to spend roughly \$300 million a year to mount a campaign of significant magnitude. That’s a buck a person. Is that too much? A buck a person. Well, where is that money going to come from? It could come from general revenues. And wouldn’t that be wonderful if Congress said, “Let’s spend \$300 million on this.” But it hasn’t and neither has a state government or a city government, regardless of the amount of hand-wringing that their health officials exercise. Another way to raise the money would be for city, state or federal legislators to put a little tax—you wouldn’t mind a little tax, would ya? Not a big tax, just a little tax—on junk foods and use those revenues to fund educational campaigns or build bike paths, or tennis courts, or basketball courts. A one-cent tax on a 12-ounce can of soda pop, that’s a teeny tax, would raise \$1.5 billion dollars a year. Is that possible, to have a little tax? Well, more than a dozen states and the city of Chicago already have a junk food tax. It is clearly feasible. Those states raise a billion dollars a year and it’s actually more like a nickel a can of soft drinks, because typically it’s a sales tax in states that don’t tax foods but they do tax candy or soft drinks or potato chips. Unfortunately, none of that billion dollars is earmarked for health purposes. But, boy, if it were earmarked, we could have tremendous campaigns. We could give everybody a billion dollars. Every American, from a toddler on up, would have one of those step meters that Professor Hill is handing out in Colorado.

Finally there’s litigation, and here I wouldn’t expect you to be shoulder to shoulder with me but surprises do happen. Remember that job I was offering you earlier? It’s interesting to note how quickly the food industry took notice when John Banzhaf and other beady-eyed litigators began to focus on the food industry, starting with McDonald’s, and that \$12.5 million dollar suit concerning frying foods in pure vegetable oils that had a little beef fat flavoring in it. And then a

New York lawyer filed suit, a class action, against McDonald's and some other companies for promoting obesity. For decades, food manufacturers and restaurant chains have been encouraging kids and the rest of us to eat diets that are plain bad for health. It seems unethical to me. I think it would be tremendously productive to use the courts to stop food manufacturers and broadcasters from encouraging bad nutrition on the airwaves and to force fast food companies to list calories up on the menu boards where people have a chance of seeing the information. And to stop schools from encouraging our children, their students, to stop encouraging them to eat junk food. Look, we've tried education. You should look in your history book. The food industry had a campaign 24 years ago, when the Federal Trade Commission said, "let's think about banning junk food ads from children's television." The food industry's response? "Let's have a committee. Let's show what we can do voluntarily and we'll do it." Well, Congress intervened, killed the Federal Trade Commission's initiative and the food industry saw no more need to have their voluntary efforts and they went back to the junk food advertising on which they've spent so much money.

Legislation is real tough. We're not expecting Congress to say, "A penny a can of soft drinks, maybe it will have an impact if we put it to good use." The industry's too powerful to let that go through. So, if we can't get much through the legislatures, I think the courts are a very interesting and appropriate place to see if broadcasters, schools, food manufacturers, fast food companies are staying within consumer protection and health laws. If you're interested in working with CSPI on any of the measures I suggested -- state, national, local level -- please contact me or Margo Wootan, in my office who is our director of nutrition policy. Stop by or website, cspinet.org, and be in touch with us. Thank you so much.

Imig: I want to thank both of our presenters and I'm sure you have as many questions in your repertoire as I have. But I'm going to go ahead and take the prerogative of asking the first one. If we actually know that eating patterns are established very early in a child's life and we also know that there are advertisements out there aimed at those children, are there ways that industry and groups like yours can work together to help families, help communities, to help establish healthy eating patterns early in life? And I need some help with my three-year-old granddaughter, who will still make every other choice but broccoli.

Finn: I think we do know that parents exert a tremendous influence on their children, particularly young children. They are the role models so, by helping families totally, I do believe you set a pattern also for children. So I do believe they are established early. You have to reach the whole family. With respect to marketing, your question is related to marketing and positioning, and the ads and the industry. You see I think if you look at the advertisements, there has been tremendous progress. Is there more things that can be done to do better ads? Absolutely. But let me just tell you I think that any company today, and some of you in this room are there, have marketing guidelines that they use to assess whether ads are appropriate or not. And maybe you read this in *Ad Age*. Kraft foods just pulled an ad because they were depicting children being sedentary, as opposed to being active. Now, that's one example. There is a heightened sensitivity to this issue today and the appropriate positioning of advertisements to children. I'll also tell you on the advisory council for the American Council for Fitness and Nutrition is the children's advertising review unit, which reviews advertisements, any advertisement related to children.

They are providing us valuable information and valuable assistance. So I think we're not far off on that. Michael?

Jacobson: Well, one of us needs better glasses. Because I think ...very rose colored, I see. *Laughter.* I think one could work with certain segments of the industry, namely the fruit and vegetable industry, in particular. They really care about promoting healthier foods because they lucked out. They produce healthful foods. The rest of the food industry believes in value added. Usually it means nutrition removed. They have to add hydrogenated fats and salts and sugar and starch and all kinds of other crap to their foods to distinguish Brand A from Brand B. Making the foods more convenient, something tastier. But that's not necessarily what people should be eating. We ought to be eating real food.

Now, in terms of advertising to kids, we're 180 degrees apart. The Federal Trade Commission under Mike Pertschuk was looking at a basic issue with food advertising to kids, and all advertising to kids. Because the psychologists have discovered decades ago that young children, under 10 or so, don't understand the very concept of advertising. And advertising to young children is inherently unfair; be it for oranges, train sets, candy bars or whatever. It's simply unfair. And that was going to be grounds for possible FTC action. Many countries are looking at this. The province of Quebec banned advertising to young kids a decade or more ago. So I don't think it's a matter of phony industry guidelines, you know, a breakfast cereal that says at the end of a 30 second commercial, "part of a good breakfast." And it'll show a good breakfast. Those don't count. I think we should get rid of all advertising aimed at kids. I would tolerate ads for oranges, and maybe broccoli ads for your three-year-old grandchild.

Susan Finn: May I make one comment? I think we differ greatly, Michael, in the philosophy about foods. I think that's where the root of a good bit of this is. I do not believe you label food as a good and bad food.

Jacobson: I wouldn't do that.

Finn: Yeah, you would. *Laughter.* Useful and worthless.

Jacobson: Everybody does.

Finn: I don't think everybody does.

Jacobson: Look, our distinguished moderator said broccoli is a good food.

Finn: Well, I don't label it. Let me just say that.

Jacobson: You don't.

Finn: I do not label them because I do believe that there are good and bad diets but I do not believe that there are good and bad foods. And I think that foods can fit. I support the principle of the American Dietetic Association, another one of your favorite organizations, but I support

the food ...the philosophy that all foods fit. The food pyramid is designed to help people say, to help tell people, that there is a good percentage of foods that you should eat more frequently. And there's some foods that you should eat less frequently and there are some foods that are kind of special foods and indulgent foods. I think those are the kinds of things that we need to teach people, rather than labeling foods and making some determination of what we think is good and bad. Because I don't think that's true.

Jacobson: I remember ...it reminds me when CSPI was doing restaurant studies, the dieticians hired by companies and maybe the ADA itself, came out and said, "We'll, you criticize kung pao chicken or something, because it's high in fat. But it should fit into a healthy diet. People could balance it with spinach salads and other healthy foods during breakfast and lunch and then you have room for kung pao chicken." So then we tested fettuccini alfredo. Four days' worth of saturated fat. You can't fit it into a good diet. You have to have negative food the rest of the day. So then the dieticians said, "It's not just day-by-day. You need to balance your diet over the course of a week. See if fettuccine alfredo could fit in."

Finn: Food is about so much more than what you think is good and what you think is bad. It's part of our life. It's part of our culture. I am certainly not an individual that steps up and tells people they can't have fettuccine alfredo if they want it. It's the amount you eat and it's the frequency and it's not...

Jacobson: Absolutely. I agree with you. You can have fettuccine once a year, say, or once a month (*laughter*). But the problem is we're eating sugary breakfast cereals and donuts and soda pop for breakfast. We're eating Big Macs and a large order of fries and soda pop for lunch. And then we're eating fettuccine alfredo for dinner.

Finn: No.

Jacobson: We eat crap from breakfast through the late-night snack and that's why we're consuming more calories, even though we're more sedentary.

Imig: Let me just use the fettuccine alfredo example. Are there ways that we can take some foods, maybe not fettuccine alfredo, but some foods that are valuable to us for our cultural or historical...I mean my family has certain favorites foods, yours does, some of them are great and some of those aren't. Are there ways we can look at producing some of these foods in ways that are healthier?

Finn: I think that's already being done. I think you see industry making a tremendous commitment to try to lower the fat and make healthy foods and make them taste as good as the real thing. But I think it gets back to the amount we're eating. I think it gets back to the frequency. I think it gets back to common sense approaches. I think it gets back to activity. And calorie intake, depending on whose statistics you read, has not increased that dramatically. But what has really increased is the amount of sedentary activity. And unless we push more activity, in addition to some alternations and some wise choices in diet, we're never going to solve this problem.

Jacobson: I tell you one of the most troubling, underlying concerns that I have is that people raised on restaurant foods and frozen dinners, no matter how healthy they are, don't know how to cook. We've created a culture that is dependent on the food industry to do the cooking for us. And then it's that vicious cycle that sets in that kids don't know how to cook. They become parents and all they know how to do is throw something in the microwave oven or drive through the restaurant.

Finn: Well, there's your lifestyle issue. There's your comprehensive approach. And we are not going to reverse the fact that people are not cooking. They buy cookbooks. But they don't cook. Six steps, better be on the table...

Jacobson: You don't want to reverse it because your whole profits, your whole corporate profits, are dependent on highly processed foods. And you may not represent the restaurants. Do you represent the restaurant industry?

Finn: I do. They're my friends, too.

Imig: Well, Michael, it's time now to open this to those of you in the audience. But first let me say, is Michael really proposing that women go back to the kitchen?

Finn: Yes, that's what I wanted to tell him!

Jacobson: No, No. Wait just one moment. I think there are surveys that are showing that men are doing much more of the cooking these days!

Finn: Oh yeah.

Imig: Yeah. Yes, please. Back along the wall, you have a question?

Question: Ms Finn?

Finn: Yes

Question: Can I ask you what you think of the thesis that a large part of the epidemic is due to the marketing genius who invented the super size?

Finn: I am not wild about super sizing, quite frankly. I am worried about portion size. I think in the industry today that is a hot topic of discussion. They are concerned about it too. I think you bring up a very good point about the sizes. I think we need to do something to help educate Americans about what's an appropriate serving and dieticians, your friends, have been preaching that gospel for a long time. And I do believe the industry is looking at what they need to do to really offer more appropriate serving sizes for people. I think it is something we need to work on.

Jacobson: Well, I think having your dieticians talk to the companies that hire them is not going to be the way to deal with serving sizes. I think what will help will be calorie information, so that

when you go into McDonald's you see the different size soda pops and it will tell you what the caloric cost is in addition to the monetary cost.

Imig: Okay, we have a question right here, please.

Question: This question is for Dr. Finn. Dr. Jacobson had alluded to the idea that when manufacturers of the "top-of-the-pyramid" foods get involved in the obesity issue, they tend to focus more on the calories out side of the equation, encouraging us to exercise. I wonder if you could give us some examples of marketing programs that deal with the calories in side of the equations in a way that is really going to make a difference.

Finn: I can't give you an example. I'm too new in this spot to give you a specific example. But I can tell you that that there has been some discussion of, golly, this is a PR campaign on activity, particularly from some of the more indulgent foods at the top of the pyramid. That is absolutely not true. It is taking a look at what really works and what's really happening in this country with the increased sedentary activity. And it is the realization that both of those things fit. I am really sorry I just don't have an example at my fingertips. I will in about another month.

Imig: Okay, right here please?

Question: Every time we have a transportation bill, there are always efforts to get funding for bikeways and transportation alternatives in the bill in addition to highway funding. And it always comes up to objections from the auto industry. I was wondering to what extent is the food industry, and the companies you represent, willing to put its lobbying clout toward bikeways and things like that?

Finn: You know, we are looking at bills that promote activity. I can't speak specifically about that bill. You're talking about a specific bill. But as these bills come up we absolutely will be looking at them. Do they fit in with something we very strongly believe in about making neighborhoods safer and providing more activity opportunity for kids? We will be looking at those to lend support if they fit in with our particular platform.

Imig: Okay, in the back, please...

Question: Dr. Jacobson, you have established yourself over the years as they nation's chief dietary scold. You've asked for taxes on butter, potato chips, meat, soda pop, you name it. You've demonized foods. What would you say to average Americans who would say to you, "What I feed my kid and what I put in my body is not the government's business and it's definitely not yours."

Jacobson: And maybe it's not the food industry's business. The food industry spends something like \$25 billion a year sticking its nose into every family's life, saying you ought to eat this value added product, or that one. I think it's a fiction created by the food industry that CSPI just scolds. If you look at every issue of *Nutrition Action*, we typically rate foods from best to worst. We try to highlight the best foods. We believe in indulgent kinds of foods. But they are very different

foods than are at the tip of the pyramid. We think people ought to indulge in healthy foods that are every bit as delicious as the standard fare at McDonalds.

Question: So, are average Americans incapable of making intelligent decisions? Do they all need your help to make smart choices?

Jacobson: I think when they have \$25 billion a year of advertising pressure and the temptations provided by 3 million soft drink vending machines, and a hundred and some thousand fast food restaurants, they do need help. They will in a culture that promotes sloth and gluttony. And if the government's not going to help them, I don't know who is. And so our hope is that sensible government programs will help people eat healthier diets and exercise more. That hasn't happened. And maybe it's going to take litigation by some creative attorneys to help move our society in a better direction.

Finn: I think what worked in the past and what exists in the past is not relevant for today. I think we're in a new world with a new awareness with increased recognition of this obesity problem by Americans. I do not believe we can go back to the past and say this happened and so this is what's going to happen in the future. I believe we need a new, fresh approach. I think families want a fresh approach. I think they want it positive. I think they want it simple. I think don't think they want to feel guilty and I think they want to make it doable. I think we need a comprehensive strategy that's realistic and workable for American families. And I don't think it is the bans and restrictions. It is about acknowledging to people that they have the right to make the decision. Now, let's help you make better choices.

Imig: I would like to talk about incentives after, but we have a question here.

Question: Given the size of the industry that you represent, I would think that one of the positive things that you could do would be a massive educational plan that would be done in conjunction with consumer groups and neighborhood groups. What are you thinking about in terms of a massive educational campaign that would be directed at people of color, recent immigrants and so forth?

Finn: Good question. We are first of all focused on two things: policies that support the concept and secondly what really seems to be working. I think business really does very well, before you launch into something, let's find out where we really are. Not where we were but where we are today. And we're identifying some very good programs. That's our start. On the council are members from a variety of different organizations. IFIC, who is here today, is an example of a representative on our council that has a very firm and a very strong consumer education outreach. There are others. We have National Parks and Recreation. We have associations that are joining us. And all of them obviously have programs going on. What we need to do is have a very coordinated effort in this initiative. It's working together.

Question: I'd just like to say I'd like to see the council take on large funding efforts on its own, not just refer to programs of individual members.

Imig: Question in the back here?

Question: We've had NLEA for 10 years and we haven't really turned the tide on obesity. We are really heavier than we have ever been. If we do get calories on menu boards and that doesn't work, then what's next?

Imig: I'm sorry, I should be reminding everyone, would you please tell us who you are and where you're from?

Question: I'm Lisa Katic and I'm a consultant in the nutrition arena and I am an advisory board member for the American Council.

Jacobson: I think nutrition labeling, which you know...Bruce Silverglade standing shoulder to shoulder with you lobbied very strongly for the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act and we think it provides extraordinarily useful information to millions of Americans. Millions of Americans are using it. I think the typical person who uses it is somebody whose doctor said watch your sodium intake or watch your saturated fat intake because you have heart disease. I think we need to simplify...we need to supplement that extremely valuable nutrition label with other information that can reach a less motivated person, maybe a less educated person. A more harried person. And that's why I think of using simple symbols that would attract people to the best foods and to alert people to special problems in some of the foods. I think that would be a very useful step. But we can't expect nutrition labels of whatever kind...the kind I would design or the kind we have... to solve the entire problem. This is one area where Susan and I and you agree wholeheartedly that it's a very complicated issue. No one single issue measure is going to solve the problem. I think clearer labeling would be one extremely valuable step.

Finn: (inaudible) We should make sure people use some of the things that are already there before we dramatically revise the way we look at this issue.

Jacobson: Weren't you saying the same thing about nutrition labeling about 15 years ago? Companies provide brochures. Just call up their 800 number. You get nutrition information. You have to make it useful, accessible. I was looking at a poster in McDonald's yesterday. It was this matrix of 50 foods down the left, 20 nutrients across the top. There's no way to interpret it. Grocery stores don't have books at the end of each aisle, so you can see what does Quaker Instant Oatmeal have in it and then compare it to Cheerios. Getting it on the label in a clear, readable means is the way to do it.

Finn: We were in Au Bon Pain the other day. They have a wonderful little computer program. You can plug it in. There are some establishments doing that.

Imig: Go ahead. And then your next and then the woman in pink.

Question: Caroline Smith DeWaal from CSPI...

Jacobson: Don't ask me a tough question, Caroline, or you're in trouble.

Question: My six-year-old, Ethan, keeps coming home saying, “But mom, donuts are good for me. Everything’s good for me because it’s on the bottom of the food pyramid.” I am now trying to educate him about whole wheat and whole grain. Does the food pyramid need to be revamped because six-year-olds are being trained that a lot of this is good for them, when it really is in fact at the top of the food pyramid?

Finn: This is directed at me? I’m going to give you my personal opinion. I’m not speaking as the council at this point. We’re not doing a very good job of getting people to eat the food pyramid way. I would rather see our energies devoted to that than shifted and doing another kind of pyramid. I think we are expecting that pyramid to do things that it never was intended to do. There might be some tweaking that could go on. But I am for one saying we’d be a whole lot better off if we were eating that way than spending our time and effort revising it. That’s my opinion.

Jacobson: Well, the Department of Agriculture will be revising it.

Finn: Yes, they are...

Jacobson: ...and I think there are some very interesting alternatives that have been proposed that would encourage Ethan and millions of other Americans to eat a diet based more on whole foods, fresh fruits and vegetables, beans, low fat dairy products and so on.

Imig: Go ahead, please...

Question: Linda Thompson. I’m a nutrition consultant in a low-income community. People need to be exposed to this new thing called cooking. It’s time for us to stop talking and start doing. Why can’t the media get together with McDonald’s or Wendy’s or Burger King and have a big campaign about eating healthy in a way that’s constructive but not bashing them?

Imig: Thank you for your question. Can you respond?

Finn: Okay. How do I get \$200 million from each fast food company to do campaign? Is that your question? That’s a toughie. First of all, let me say I agree with you about cooking skills. I think surveys that we have done through the council say that parents, families believe there should be more nutrition education at schools. I think that goes right along with food preparation as well. So I agree with you on that. What about massive education campaigns? I think you will find them being done on an individual basis. I know that there are companies specifically looking at what they do and how they design these initiatives. Can they all get together and do it together? I don’t have an opinion whether that’s possible right now or not. But I can tell you they are working together. You have got IFIC, that again puts out campaign materials that are based on solid science. Companies belong to those. They orchestrate their continuing education program and their consumer education programs through IFIC. That’s one mechanism that happens.

Imig: Okay. You're going to formulate a question in back?

Question: I'm Carol (inaudible) from Edelman. Question for Dr. Jacobson. Did I hear you say that part of your litigation strategy was go ahead and sue schools?

Jacobson: Was that directed at me? I don't have a litigation strategy. I don't have a litigator. But I think the litigators who have been talking about using their skills to improve the American diet and prevent obesity would do well to look at school systems. I know John Banzhaf has talked about that, that parents put their kids in trust with the school system. Are schools violating that trust by encouraging kids to eat junk food? I think it's an avenue that needs to be explored. I have no idea what the legal merits of that are.

Imig: Question right here please.

Question: I'm Chip from the Grocery Manufacturers of America, but I'm asking as Austin's dad. One of the things my son asks is why he only has 20 minutes for lunch and why he doesn't have time for recess and why school doesn't offer PE everyday. What are we doing to get PE back in schools and to get communities organized to provide these opportunities?

Jacobson: Well, I think we should do that. I hate to blame your member companies because ...

Question: You think no PE in schools is our fault?

Michael Jacobson: Yes. The reason is that big business and the Republicans have done everything they could to cut government spending. Look at the deficit. Under Reagan and now under Bush, when you have a huge deficit, you've got to cut those extra programs. You spend it on defense. You spend it on the entitlement programs and there's no money left over for those extras, like longer school days or PE teachers. So that's my view on that.

Question: It's an interesting view.

Imig: Another question? Yes.

Question: I'm with the Department of Health and Human Services, but I'm asking a question based on my background in the food industry. Industry exists to make profits for stockholders. How willing should the food industry be to undertake a strategy on obesity that might result in lost sales?

Jacobson: I think you are right. I think it's unrealistic to expect industry organizations like IFIC and ISLE and your council to discourage the consumption of french fries and hamburgers and so on. Maybe what we should expect, to be realistic, is that groups like those can mount campaigns to promote more physical activity and if they did that...fine. And maybe we go to the auto industry to support nutrition campaigns. *Laughter.*

Finn: Let me know how you do with that one, will you?

Imig: I attended a smart growth conference a few weeks ago and for the first time there were people at that conference representing health. And one of the themes was how we plan communities for the future that encourage more walking and make it possible to walk because we have communities in which it's almost impossible to walk or ride a bike. And that's the first time I heard that kind of a theme and I thought it was great. Michael, you mentioned something earlier about local foods. Would local foods be more appealing, particularly fruits and vegetables? And I'd like you to elaborate on that a little bit.

Jacobson: We all used to eat local foods. But now we usually eat foods shipped from long distances. Local foods are often tastier. And that can be a real attraction. There are little experiments with farmers markets that feature locally grown foods. And I know farmers markets are one of the glues that hold communities together. In my neighborhood, there's a farmers market and it's the only time people ever see each other. We get wonderful food. It's overpriced, unfortunately. But it's supporting some, not even local, but some Pennsylvania farmer and ...not a D.C. farmer. So I don't know how realistic is it to think we're going to have many more fruit and vegetable farmers around every major city. But it's occurring to a little extent. Kellogg has been a great supporter of that philosophy.

Imig: You had a question right here?

Question: I'm Stephanie Childs, also with the Grocery Manufacturers of America. How do you propose to provide fresh fruits and vegetables during winter months when local farms cannot provide them? It's great that we have fruits and vegetables provided year round in our grocery stores.

Jacobson: Well, human beings traditionally have grown foods locally. This shipping in from long distances is a relatively recent phenomenon and people ate different foods, say more potatoes for vitamin C rather than oranges. You know fruits can grow quite late into seasons. Apples can be stored. It's really since the 1940s and 1950s that these massive changes have occurred. I don't know that it's irreversible. And I grant you I love getting oranges and we don't grow very many in Washington either in the summer or the winter. Even our damn cherry trees don't produce cherries.

Finn: I would just make one comment. I think our conversation has gone slightly astray here. But I think our conversation is related to what was, and it's not really where families and people are today. We are busy. The average woman spends something like 18 days a year in her car taking her kids to soccer practice. She is not going to do all these different things. And she's not going to go back and start cooking meals again. It is unrealistic. I think we have to erase the old and look at the new. There is a new opportunity here to make a difference in the health of our families and our children. Let's look at a comprehensive approach that covers both eating healthy and activity. I think that's the only way we're going to move forward.

Imig: Yes, please frame your question and then one more here...

Question: David Pelletier from Cornell University. Could we have a debate on whether there are good ads and bad ads? We could say the overall portfolio is what matters. The advertising budget is exactly counter to what we want for good nutrition. It isn't because the food industry conspired to do it this way. It's because each company promotes what it sells.

Finn: I think that gets back then to helping people make choices that are sound and sensible.

Question: Would your council support having each company's advertising conform to a more healthful profile?

Finn: No, I think they would support the fact that we can advance policies and programs that make a difference in overall health and make it motivational for them to do it. I don't think we'd be looking at any restrictions. I think we'd be looking at positive things they could do to educate. Not restrictions.

Imig: One final question...

Question: How much do you think the risk of diabetes and obesity would be reduced if everyone followed the present dietary guidelines and the food guide pyramid and the FDA's recommended dietary intake?

Finn: I agree. I mentioned when we had the question on the pyramid that we would be a whole lot better off devoting energies to helping people follow those guidelines now because they aren't doing it. It would dramatically reduce the incidences of those diseases.

Question: Is it possible to get people to eat certain items only sparingly?

Finn: I do think it's possible to educate people. Will you get everybody? No. But I think through a comprehensive approach in our schools and in our communities with community action programs, with physical education programs, I absolutely do believe we'll get a sizable number of people being more aware of that. I think that's our goal.

Imig: Okay. I want you to join me please in thanking our presenters for an outstanding discussion. Thank you both very much.