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Ready to Speak Up for School Meals?

School nutrition professionals from across the country will soon be together at SNA's Legislative Action Conference (LAC) in Washington, D.C., on March 9-11. Even if you can't attend LAC, you have an opportunity to make your voice heard on the policies that impact your programs. Connect, advocate and help shape the future of school meals.



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LAC 2025
LEGISLATIVE ACTION CONFERENCE



Running or working within a school nutrition program isn't an easy job. Between navigating regulations, dealing with supply chain headaches, stretching dollars and, the obvious, making sure kids are fed great-tasting, healthy meals, you've got a lot to deal with. The decisions being made in Washington have a direct impact on your successes. That's why attending this year's LAC and advocating for your program is so important. You don't have to be a policy expert or a political junkie, just someone who cares about making school meals better and making sure lawmakers hear what's really happening in your cafeterias. Whether at LAC or back home in your local districts, here are five things to keep in mind when advocating for school nutrition:

▶▶▶ 2025 POSITION PAPER

SNA's 2025 *Position Paper* calls on Congress to address long-term economic and regulatory challenges for school meal programs, urging lawmakers to:

- Increase NSLP/SBP reimbursement rates by 40 cents per lunch and 15 cents per breakfast
- Protect Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and expand access to healthy school meals for all students
- Address unpaid school meal debt



Scan the QR code to read the full *Position Paper*.

What will school lunch make you?



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“Legislators want to hear from school nutrition professionals in their communities, and the more voices they hear, the more likely they are to take action that actually helps.”

1. Together Starts With You

You may think, *“I’m just one person. Can my voice really make a difference?”* The answer? Absolutely. The policies being debated in Congress impact how you run the cafeteria: Funding, Community Eligibility Provision regulations, nutrition standards and equipment grants to name just a few. If lawmakers don’t hear directly from the people their policies are affecting, they’re making decisions without knowing how things actually work. LAC is where you get to change that. You’ll have the chance to sit down with legislators and their staff and tell them exactly what’s going on in your schools. From sharing a challenge like struggling with rising food costs to telling your Farm to School success story, your firsthand experiences are a powerful force. And when you show up, speak up and share your story, you set something bigger in motion. One voice starts a larger conversation. Legislators want to hear from school nutrition

professionals in their communities, and the more voices they hear, the more likely they are to take action that actually helps.

2. Personal Stories Make a Powerful Impact

You don’t need a law degree or a binder full of statistics to make an impression. While the data is important, your personal experiences bring those numbers to life in a way that helps connect challenges with actionable solutions. Legislators and their teams hear from lobbyists and policy experts all day, but what really helps get through to them are the stories from people like you. When they hear about how a lack of funding forces you to cut back on fresh produce or scratch cooking initiatives, or how students in need often go without under the complex free and reduced-price meal application process, they start to see the real-world impact of their decisions. Even if you’ve never spoken to a lawmaker before, don’t worry. Whether you are attending LAC or advocating from home, visit [SNA’s LAC Resources](#) page for advocacy tips and tools to help share your story in a way that resonates.

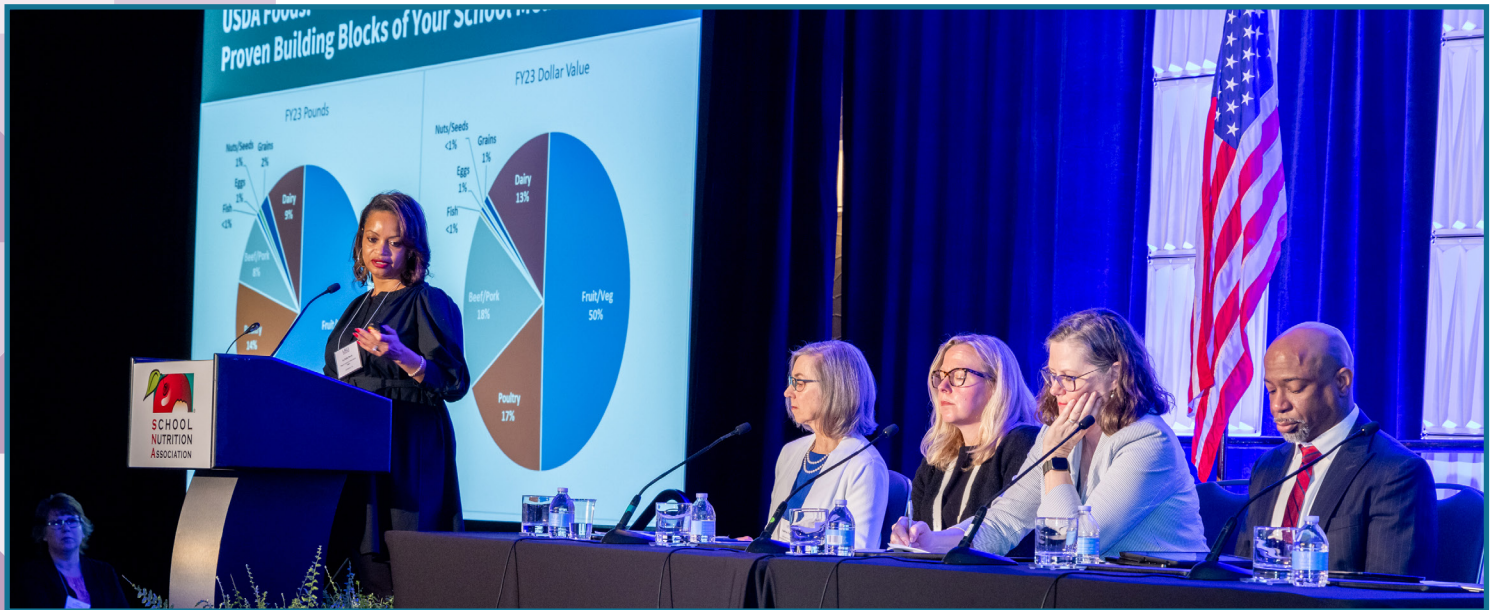


“You know what works (and what doesn’t) in school cafeterias and you see firsthand how regulations play out in real time.”



3. Remember: You’re the Expert

A lot of people hesitate to get involved in advocacy because they think they don’t have enough policy experience or aren’t as informed on the “government side” of things. But here’s the truth—you already have the most important knowledge. You know what works (and what doesn’t) in school cafeterias and you see firsthand how regulations play out in real time. You understand how funding affects what ends up on students’ trays. That makes you the expert,



4. Strength in Numbers

Sometimes it can feel like you're fighting these battles alone. At LAC, it's important to remember you're surrounded by hundreds of people who get it. School nutrition professionals of varying experiences and backgrounds come together, not just to advocate, but to swap ideas, share stresses and build connections that last long after the conference ends. Expect to meet people who understand your challenges. These are peers who have faced the same obstacles and maybe even found creative solutions to overcome them. You'll have opportunities to network in both structured and casual settings, from table discussions and engaging sessions to coffee

and it is exactly why lawmakers need to hear from you. SNA gives you the tools and talking points you need, but the most important thing is sharing what you know.



chats and hallway conversations that spark unexpected collaborations. You'll also get to connect with SNA's leadership and policy experts who are working behind the scenes to support school nutrition on the national level. And don't forget—advocacy is stronger when it's done together. When legislators see a unified group of professionals pushing for change, they may be more willing to pay attention.

5. Keep the Momentum Going

Advocacy doesn't stop when you leave LAC—it's a year-round effort! It comes home with you, ready to be put into action. Invite legislators to visit your cafeteria when they're home for a district work period—**SNA's Cafeteria Site Visit 101** can help. Use **SNA's Action Network** to send letters to your representatives urging their support

for school meals. SNA's Government Affairs team is also here to guide you every step of the way and make sure you leave with more than a few takeaways. Plus, the connections you make at LAC and the knowledge you gain can become part of an ever-growing advocacy toolkit.

We all know it is crucial that school meals remain a priority in Congress. Again, you don't need to be a political expert, and you don't need to have all the answers. What matters most is your perspective, your experience and your willingness to share. No one can tell the story of school meals better than you—the long hours, the dedication and the small victories that make a big difference. All these conversations and shared experiences have the power to shape policy. It's your voice that can help enact change—be sure to use it. **SN+**

►►► Advocacy Resources

- **Position Paper Talking Points:** Message points to help you discuss each issue on SNA's *Position Paper*
- **Look Up Your Legislators:** Enter your address to locate your legislator's bio, contact information and voting records
- **SNA Advocacy Toolkit:** Your one-stop guide to become an effective advocate for school nutrition programs
- **District Profile Sheet:** A customizable fact sheet to help you share relevant information with your legislators

All photos are from SNA's 2024 Legislative Action Conference in Washington, D.C.

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