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Don't Clintonize food recovery programs; end laws that reduce America's food supply

WASHINGTON, DC — President Bill Clinton thinks we waste too much food, so he's turning to federal bureaucrats — the same people who pay farmers not to grow food and who inflate the cost of food that Americans buy — to solve the problem.

"Clinton has bitten off more than he can chew if he thinks that federal bureaucrats, with their 70-year track record of reducing America's food supply, can provide more food for the hungry," said Steve Dasbach, chairman of the Libertarian Party.

In his November 23rd radio address, Clinton said, "Too much food goes to waste" in America. So Clinton has instructed federal agencies to start food recovery programs — patterned after private charitable efforts to salvage wasted food from restaurants and grocery stores — and distribute it to the needy.

"Clinton ignores the fact that for the past 70 years, government agricultural programs have caused millions of tons of food to be stockpiled, destroyed, or never grown. This costs Americans billions annually in higher food prices," said Dasbach. "Rather than create new government initiatives, Clinton should end government programs that exacerbate the hunger problem."

How does the government reduce America's food supply? Through hundreds of programs that make food more scarce or expensive, said Dasbach. As examples, he noted:

■ In 1992, the USDA made it a federal crime to sell 500 million peaches and nectarines because government bureaucrats said they were too small — some by 1/16th of an inch.

■ In 1992, the USDA's Raisin Administrative Committee prohibited California farmers from selling 147 million pounds of seedless raisins, to drive up prices.

■ In 1986-87, the government paid dairy farmers to kill 1.6 million cows — costing consumers \$7 billion in higher dairy prices.

■ In 1993, the USDA paid farmers to *not* plant crops on over 50 million acres.

■ By 1993, federal farm laws cost consumers \$12 billion annually in higher food prices.

In addition to federal programs that reduce food supplies, local governments have also passed laws that make it a crime to feed the hungry and homeless, noted Dasbach. For example, in San Francisco, police have arrested more than 700 people for feeding the poor without a permit. One anti-homeless activist — arrested 92 times for feeding the homeless — faced a life sentence under California's three-strikes-and-you're-out law.

"Does Clinton really want to help ease the problem of hunger?" asked Dasbach. "If he does, the solution is to eliminate government laws that make food more expensive, scarce, or illegal."

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