

Food Industry Influence on Dietary Advice in the United States

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Abstract

This study utilizes data regarding food industry spending and nutrition policy outcomes to determine influence food industry holds on public offices. The question investigated is what influence food industry has on nutrition policy and public health? The most visible aspect of nutrition policy in the United States is the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which are to be released by January 1st, 2016. The American public has continued to develop health problems such as obesity and diabetes even as nutrition science has advanced and created more readily available nutrition information. Nutrition policy is important because it dictates the way consumers understand and purchase food. Food industry influence comes both in subtle and direct forms. The influence is much further reaching than just the Dietary Guidelines. Food industry is shaping the food policy for the United States, not the consumers it effects. The results demonstrate that the food industry exercises undue influence over the shaping of Dietary Guidelines and nutrition policy as a whole.

Keywords: Dietary Advice, Food Industry, United States of America

1. Introduction

Nutrition policy plays a vital role for the health of the United States. These policies set the standard for public health. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (DGA) are the cornerstone of nutrition policy in the United States. The Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act of 1990 dictates DGA are released at least every five years. The modern dietary guideline format did not begin circulation until 1980 after years of informal advice. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) jointly review and release the DGA. The purpose of dietary guidelines are to promote good health within the general public, as well as to serve as the basis for nutrition programs across the country. Nutrition has been of growing concern for the United States as diet related diseases are on the rise. Diet is directly linked to heart disease, obesity, and diabetes.¹ Dietary Guidelines for Americans have only become more important as obesity rates have tripled over the last 30 years.² Diagnosed cases of diabetes have quadrupled over the same time span.³ Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States.⁴ One in four deaths ever year is caused by heart disease.⁵ These health trends have only heightened the need for nutrition policy based on the most up to date science.

Nutrition Policy is crucial to public health. Understanding the formation process allows consumers to better understand how the advice was created. The United States political system has always allowed special interest groups and trade organizations to control new policies. Trade organizations and interest groups are entities that lobby on behalf of industry to obtain policies favorable to certain industries. The dietary guidelines and nutrition science have become more political as the polarization of government continues. Dietary guidelines have a direct impact on the food industry as these guidelines are widely dispersed. Food Industry is defined as all things going into the production, processing, distribution, and sale of foods. Agribusiness and industry will be used as other terms for the food industry throughout the paper. The DGA can have a negative effect on the food industry's profits. Agribusiness is a multibillion

dollar industry and accounts for nearly 5% of the US Gross Domestic Product (GDP).⁶ Agribusiness has a financial incentive to ensure these policies are friendly to business.

The role of food industry on DGA and nutrition policy can be difficult to pinpoint. Through lobbying efforts, campaign donations, public relations campaigns, and public sponsorships the connection can be clearly articulated. *Dietary Guidelines* are not the only aspect of nutrition policy that the food industry has exerted influence. Food Industry utilizes relationships with members of congress, Government agencies, and nutritionists in order to promote products. Industry aims to fund studies and work with nutritionists for a more favorable light to their product. Agribusiness is not the only group attempting to influence nutrition policy. Health organizations such as the American Heart Association, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, and American Academy of Pediatrics, and Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. These groups aim to work with the nutrition programs to promote a healthier diet. These groups are often at odds with food industry. There are instances where these groups are often sponsored by the very trade organizations that contribute to the diet related diseases today. This paper seeks to determine the role food industry plays in the creation and implementation, particularly the DGA.

2. History of Dietary Guidelines and Nutrition Policy

Dietary Guidance for Americans has been a tradition dating back over 100 years. W.O. Atwater was the first director of the USDA Office of Experiment Stations, which in 1894 released the first dietary recommendations based on foods Americans should be consuming.⁷ This led to the long progression of dietary recommendations that were released over the next century. The USDA began using food groups in 1916 with the release of *Food for Young Children* and the subsequent *How to Select Food* which was more focused on the family purchasing decisions instead of just children.⁸ Recommended Daily Allowance's (RDA's) were released in 1941. RDA's continue to be utilized and can be seen on most food packages with percentages next to selected nutrients. RDA's are useful because people need a certain amount of eat nutrient and these help consumers determine what is a good amount. World War II and the Great Depression shifted nutrition policy as food supply became limited. Nutrients became more important as a contrast to getting enough calories. Wartime saw people lacking necessary nutrients instead of necessary calories. Nutrients were viewed as more important at this time due to increase of calories in the food supply The modern DGA's started with the *Dietary Goals for the United States*, also known as the McGovern Report, released in 1977 by the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs. While this report was not formally adopted by the agencies that currently release nutrition advice. The *Dietary Goals for the United States* began the process leading to the USDA and DHHS releasing dietary advice. The USDA released *Food and The Hassle-Free Guide to a Better Diet*, which is the precursor to the DGA. The DHEW released *Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease*. The report advised the reduction of fats, sugar, and cholesterol as a way to prevent obesity and diet related diseases.⁹ The creation of the first DGA began the following year and created a single diet necessary to eat healthy. Subsequent dietary guidance has largely mirrored the first ones; only changing in the food groups and advised serving sizes.

Dietary Guidance has been largely based on breaking diets down into simple charts and food groups. These charts allow people a clear understanding of the foods that lead to a healthier diet. The food groups change as science advances and foods can be split up. The beginning guidance had five food groups; "meat and dairy", "cereals", "vegetables and fruit", "fats and fatty foods", and "sugar and sugary foods".¹⁰ These food groups relied more on nutrient information such as vitamins and minerals. The next food group to exist was created during World War II and was titled *National Wartime Nutrition Guide*. The *Nutrition Guide* advocates for 7 food groups; "milk and milk products", "meat, poultry, eggs, beans, peas, and nuts", "bread, flour, and cereals", "leafy green and yellow vegetables", "potatoes and sweet potatoes", "citrus, tomato, cabbage, salad greens", and "butter, fortified margarine".¹¹ These groups were created on the basis of RDA's and the limited availability in the food supply. In 1956 the food groups were reworked again, these were overly simplified into milk, meat, fruits and vegetables, and cereals.¹² The USDA termed these the *Basic Four*. These food groups were used for the next 2 decades. The *Hassle-Free Food Guide*, an easy to understand pamphlet, utilized the basic four and added a fifth group of sweets, fat, and alcohol to be used in moderation. The *Food Wheel* was created with the 1984 DGA's; the food groups were similar to previous ones. The major difference was the food wheel included daily serving sizes, which can be seen in Figure 1. The food wheel was designed to aid American's eating habits to fulfill all the requirements because each group is part of a balanced diet. The USDA released the *Food Guide Pyramid* (Figure 2), which has become the most recognizable nutrition advice, in 1992 with six separate food groups. The hierarchical design hoped to give consumers a better understanding what foods should be eaten more than others. The 2011 *MyPyramid* (Figure 3) followed the pyramid design, however, it split everything into stripped columns. The intended purpose was to show eating in moderation.

The new pyramid was not as successful and was changed due to consumer confusion. The current graphic used is *MyPlate* (Figure 4); created in 2011 and has 5 food groups. Fats and sweet, while removed from the graphic, are still a concern for nutritionists. Removing them was designed to show consumers fats and sweets should not be part of a balanced meal. *MyPlate* has been widely accepted by nutritionists as a better communication of a healthy diet compared to past dietary graphics.

3. Agriculture Promotion and Nutrition Policy: USDA

The USDA is tasked with several main goals that are designed to aid the public good. The USDA describes their purpose as leading public policy in food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, and nutrition.¹³ Historically, the USDA has aimed to provide economic opportunity to farmers ensuring constant production and profits for producers.¹⁴ The USDA mission of agricultural promotion and farmer protection can be counterintuitive to the mission of producing nutrition policy. This type of policy is increasingly going against the best nutrition advice for Americans. The new goal for Americans is to eat less or else the obesity rates will continue to rise. Nutrition policy has only been apart of the USDA mission for 30 years of the department's 150-year history. This comparison will always place agriculture promotion ahead of nutrition.

The USDA operates multiple service programs designed to benefit American citizens. The USDA has sub-departments with individual goals these are; the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). The CNPP is tasked with promoting and creating the DGA. This means continuously researching nutrition science in order to provide American consumers with the most up to date nutrition information. FNS is responsible for the food and nutrition assistance programs such as Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the school meal programs. This organization has a more direct line to use the DGA by utilizing them in meal and nutrition education programs. AMS is tasked with promoting agricultural commodities such as meat, dairy, eggs, and vegetables.

AMS specifically uses Marketing Orders to carry out state sanctioned campaigns to promote certain commodities. These are more commonly called check off programs and congressional law dictates that a portion of sales be used to advertise specific agricultural commodities.¹⁵ The Commodity Promotion Act established the check off program as a means to increase the image and sales of a commodity.¹⁶ Producers may file for an exemption if the amount of the commodity produced is below a certain minimum. The check-off program cannot use money to lobby congressional members. Instead, the money is used to lobby the public into purchasing products. The difference can become hard to determine as the organization that utilizes the check off program is a non-profit and often works closely with lobbying trade organizations.¹⁷ These organizations often work close enough to share an address with the lobbying arm, an example being the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board alongside the National Cattlemen's Association.¹⁸ This type of close working relationship gives a check off program and a trade organization the ability to utilize nonprofit state sanctioning marketing and lobbying to work as one unit. The USDA is required to set up the boards that run the check off programs. While the entities are legally separate it is difficult to distinguish between the two when such close work environments exist.

Food and Nutrition Services is crucial to the disseminating of DGA and nutrition policy. This branch of the USDA is tasked with providing low-income communities the opportunity to make smart food decisions. These nutrition programs aim to help low-income communities, who traditionally have difficulty obtaining nutritious meals, make smart choices for healthier food. The school meals program is crucial to promoting a nutritious diet from a young age. Low-income students often do not have healthy food options outside of the school programs. The school meal programs are designed to meet dietary goals for students. The WIC program educates young mothers and pregnant women on choosing nutritious meals. Utilizing the current federal government guidelines is crucial to these mothers as they raise their children. Children's eating habits often continue throughout their life and it is important to start early. SNAP gives people the added benefit of affording more food than their incomes allow. However, SNAP does not restrict foods based on nutritious value. Meaning, soda and highly processed foods are allowed under the guidelines. FNS is essential to giving Americans the information needed to make healthy choices.

The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion is the division of the USDA that reviews current science and creates the most up to date nutrition policy. This includes the DGA that make up the nutrition policy in the United States. The Food Pyramid, the most recognizable nutrition policy, was created by this agency. The work done here ensures all nutrition based government programs are operating based on the DGA. This makes them the creators of Nutrition Policy. The team is made up of nutritionists and dieticians that review all available science to make the most informed decision on nutrition. Promoting them through easy to understand messages like the Food Pyramid or My Plate.

4. Nutrition Programs: Dietary Guidelines and Food Industry Influences

Dietary Guidelines for Americans form the base of nutrition policy across all government agencies. The nutrition programs aid low-income Americans to get enough calories and afford food that may have otherwise been unobtainable. Americans living below the poverty line are at a greater risk for diet related diseases than the rest of the public.¹⁹ Strong nutrition policy allows recipients to better understand the foods that are most beneficial to a healthy diet. Low-income families are not the only beneficiaries of sound nutrition policy as the information is disseminated to schools. This dissemination promotes healthy eating decisions from a young age.

The WIC program is especially controlled by the DGA. WIC specifically focuses on prenatal health and the health for young children. Pregnant women are eligible up until six weeks after the pregnancy ends, infants are covered up until first birthday, and children until fifth birthday.²⁰ This happens through education programs that utilize the DGA for a basis of healthy eating. WIC provides these groups with supplemental nutritious foods. The program utilizes public health arenas to give pregnant women and new mothers information on keeping their families healthy. This is not an entitlement program it is instead a grant program where a lump sum is set aside to be given to states that opt to take part. The most effective part about the WIC program is that it has a limit on what types of food that can be purchased. While SNAP allows the purchase of most foods. WIC attempts to limit purchases to foods that are higher in nutrition. This limits on what foods can be purchased makes WIC one of the more successful nutrition programs. WIC utilizing nutrition as a basis for foods promotes and is widely successful at reducing health care costs as well as infant mortality rates.²¹ The success of WIC points to a government nutrition program that can combat health problems. Modeling other nutrition programs after WIC would promote a healthier society with reductions in diet related diseases.

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) served nearly 32 million children every school day, this cost \$11.6 billion during the 2012 fiscal year. The large number of children participating makes it a huge payout for food industry groups who can get products into schools. School lunch programs are required to meet the standards established by the DGA. This makes it difficult for food companies to fulfill the requirements necessary as “junk” foods are naturally empty calories. The USDA does not define junk food because it has avoided calling any food good or bad.²² This makes it difficult for programs to promote healthier options. Allowing companies to sell products outside of the reimbursement program, which often have very low nutrient dense foods. Within schools these are called competitive foods as these foods compete with the federally funded lunch program. Competitive foods are held to nutrition standards, through the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010. The agencies designed to enforce these laws often struggle because of loopholes and financial constraints. This provides competitive foods the opportunity to avoid meeting government nutrition standards.

Nutrition programs have a platform that other agencies lack. Programs interact with consumers most at risk for diet related disease. Proper enforcement and shifting policy could allow a much more successful approach to combatting health risks. Current industry and trade organizations have used the system for profits. While attempts have been made to promote a healthier environment, especially for kids. Funding and strength of corporations have prevented the full effects and intended purposes from being recognized. Nutrition assistance programs can be used to promote sound nutrition and longstanding healthy lifestyle changes. Competitive food programs and questionable ethics of marketing in schools have taken control over the necessary nutritional work that the program could create.

5. Food Industry and Dietary Guidelines

Nutrition policy begins with the formation of DGA and the modern format started with the Dietary Goals for the United States. The Dietary Goals were released with much controversy as it recommended an increase in carbohydrates and a decrease in fat and cholesterol. This of course is very damaging to the meat and egg industry. According to Marion Nestle, this sector of food made up half the fat, 62% of saturated fat, and 92% of cholesterol in the food supply.²³ This puts their economic interest in direct conflict with the advice of the report. There was debate all around over the terms of the Dietary Goals including from health associations. Economic impact of changing dietary advice could damage the profits of agribusiness. Pressure from the industry proved great and the goals were revised. The original author of the dietary goals, Nick Mottern, objected to these revisions and ultimately resigned. The most important change in the goals is the shift from reducing consumption of meat to choose meat that will reduce saturated fat in the diet.²⁴ This minor change gives a different perspective the consumer. Instead of simply reducing meat, which is the easiest way to reduce saturated fats. The recommendations of choosing meats still promote meat as a major part of the American diet.

The Food Pyramid, released in 1992, was created to replace the basic four food groups that had ruled dietary advice for the previous decade. The pyramid was put into works during the 1990 DGA. There was detailed review of the Eating Right Pyramid. Nutritionists, trade groups, and journalists had all heard about the make up of the pyramid. The new USDA Secretary, Edward Madigan, had a meeting with Meat Industry groups after the initial Food Pyramid release.²⁵ Several days later Secretary Madigan decided the Pyramid needed to be pulled because it was not adequately tested on children and low-income individuals. The USDA and DHHS conducted extensive research and testing to ensure the public sufficiently understood the pyramid.²⁶ While the USDA press secretary and Madigan denied succumbing to the industry pressure. Internal members spoke out against the killing of the food pyramid. The Food Pyramid was shut down for a time period as the “review” took place; the review lasted a year. The final release was nearly identical to the original. The USDA spent almost a million dollars and a full year to release a “new” pyramid that most consumers would not be able to discern from the original. This strong industry influence over the nutrition advice of experts only increases the scrutiny and mistrust that people have about government dietary advice.

Food industry, along with health professionals, is able to submit public comments and attend a hearing about the DGA after the advisory report is released. The Advisory Committee holds public meetings and comment periods as to gauge public perception of the new guidelines. However, much of the public does not actually understand or know that an advisory report was released. This leaves trade organizations and health sectors to lobby the advisory committee during the comments period. The advisory report meeting is very interesting because of who speaks. Reviewing the most recent public meeting, held in early 2015, reviewed these comments held by health and trade organizations. The speakers are almost always registered dietitians and nutritionists. This portrays the standing of being knowledgeable on the subject of nutrition. However, is it really possible for a nutrition expert at the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association to say that beef may not be the healthiest. Nutritionists for each trade organization promote that commodity as being essential to a balanced diet. The dairy board argues that ice cream can be included as a serving of dairy because the fat content has been significantly decreased. Nutritionists for trade organizations are not the only group to be coopted. University nutrition programs have also been infiltrated. A professor for nutrition advocated on behalf of Danon yogurt. Universities have long been held as independent entities of learning. The coopting of a nutrition program only seeks to damage the image that free thought exists.

6. Food Industry and Congress

The Iron Triangle, which can be seen in Figure 5, displays the relationship between congressional members, bureaucrats, and interest groups. There is a relationship between all of these portions that is mutually beneficial. Trade organizations play a huge role in congressional support. The members need money in order to run a campaign and gain the audience they need. Congress then aids these organizations with favorable legislation and protects them from potentially dangerous maneuvers.

The Iron Triangle framework provides the brief outline for the relationship between Congress and interest groups. Utilizing campaign donations provides concrete evidence of the relationship between the two groups as agribusiness spends millions each year on lobbying groups and political groups. Agribusiness has donated \$12 million to candidates during the current 2015-2016 election cycle.²⁷ This money was not equally distributed between Republicans and Democrats. Republicans received three times as much money as Democrats did. While one party may have received more than the other, this type of money should not be taken lightly. Both groups have this money being utilized for campaigns and necessary spending. $\frac{3}{4}$ of this money was spending on the House of Representatives.

Food Policy Action creates a scorecard each year that reviews Congressional member votes. The scoring is based on the most important food policy legislation each year. According to the website, “The Scorecard reflects the consensus of top food policy experts who select the key food policy votes each year.”²⁸ Table 1 shows the relationship between money and the scorecard record. The relationship is compiled of members of the Agriculture Committee in both the Senate and House of representatives. Members included in the table received a minimum of \$50,000. The numbers show that the House of Representatives is much more susceptible to outside money. There is also a distribution along party lines with mostly Republicans scoring low numbers. Scoring the congressional members voting records allows accountability and understanding of their voting record. The food industry is able to utilize congressional members to achieve their desired end goals. Spending money on campaign contributions can often pay back when the committees fulfill favorable legislation. The closeness of food industry and congress also pushes over into congress pressuring the USDA and the nutrition policy it is tasked with creating. The DGA have long been viewed as necessary for the health of

Table 1. Relationship between money and scorecard record

Name	Political Party	Chamber	Score ²⁹	Agribusiness donations (in thousands) ³⁰³¹
Ralph Abraham	R	House	20	80
Rich Allen	R	House	20	64
Dan Benishek	R	House	18	153
Mike Bost	R	House	20	60
Cheri Bustos	D	House	73	133
Mike Conaway	R	House	20	567
Jim Costa	D	House	50	416
Rick Crawford	R	House	25	225
Rodney Davis	R	House	33	292
Suzan DelBene	D	House	88	89
Jeff Denham	R	House	20	554
Tom Emmer	R	House	18	75
Marcia Fudge	D	House	85	109
Bob Gibbs	R	House	17	148
Chris Gibson	R	House	64	155
Bob Goodlatte	R	House	20	171
Vicky Hartzler	R	House	17	133
Steven King	R	House	20	222
Ann Kirkpatrick	D	House	77	50
Ann Mclane Kuster	D	House	100	55
Doug LaMalfa	R	House	18	236
Frank Lucas	R	House	18	447
Sean Patrick Maloney	D	House	82	68
Randy Neugebauer	R	House	20	172
Daniel Milton				
Newhouse	R	House	18	268
Rick Nolan	D	House	100	73
Colin Peterson	D	House	45	582
Mike Rogers	R	House	20	117
David Rouzer	R	House	18	341
Austin Scott	R	House	9	176
David Scott	D	House	64	94
Glen Thompson	R	House	33	109
Filemon Vela	D	House	70	90
Jackie Walorski	R	House	25	96
Timothy Walz	D	House	67	133
Ted Yoho	R	House	10	135
Michael Bennet	D	Senate	80	260
John Boozman	R	Senate	57	213
Sherrod Brown	D	Senate	100	219
Bob Casey	D	Senate	100	233
Thad Cochran	R	Senate	57	929
Joe Donnelly	D	Senate	80	163
Joni Ernst	R	Senate	40	367
Kristen Gillibrand	D	Senate	100	511
Chuck Grassley	R	Senate	40	438
Heidi Heitkamp	D	Senate	50	200
John Hoeven	R	Senate	50	272
Amy Klobuchar	D	Senate	80	473

Patrick Leahy	D	Senate	100	88
Mitch McConnell	R	Senate	40	993
David Perdue	R	Senate	40	336
Pat Roberts	R	Senate	40	658
Ben Sasse	R	Senate	40	250
Debbie Stabenow	D	Senate	100	964
John Thune	R	Senate	40	518
Tom Tillis	R	Senate	40	281

Americans and thus should be exempt from any interference that is based on politics and not science.

The Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee releases an Advisory report to allow the public a look into what is being considered for the new guidelines. The 2015 Advisory report was met with outrage by the food industry and by extension Congress. Congress opted to intervene on the food industry’s behalf. Congress undertook two methods for the food industry to interfere in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. First, members of both the House and Senate sent a letter to the heads of both the USDA and DHHS. This letter argued against including a vegetarian diet and possible sustainability as a part of the guidelines. Raising the issue that sustainability should not be a part of the DGA because it oversteps the bounds of a committee is questionable. Analyzing the language of the statute does not say anything in regards to sustainability. The Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act of 1990 relates the “food supply and demand determinations” as part of nutrition.³² The supply and demand for the food supply would include sustainability as a viable part of DGA. The Senators and Representatives then followed this letter up with a rider in the Agriculture Appropriations Bill. The rider states that funds cannot be used for anything outside the strict scope of diet and nutrition intake.³³ It also sets an unusually high standard of scientific evidence. While it is important that the best science is used for nutrition advice. The science is always changing and holding something to the grade level strong is a difficult task to achieve. This type of interference is very clearly on behalf of the food industry and not the American public. Rep. Vicky Hartzler’s, one of the authors of the letter, government page has the supporters of the letter she sent. The supporters are all trade organizations that include National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, Livestock Marketing Association, and North American Meat Institute. These are all industries that would be harmed by the dietary guidelines promoting a sustainable, plant based diet. The relationship between trade organizations and congressional members is nothing new. However, the stakes are higher now because the increased need for nutrition policy as the public health becomes more important.

Table 2.³⁴ Agribusiness Contributions to House of Representatives

House of Representatives	# of Members	Avg. Contributions	Total Contributions
Democrats	160	\$13,181	\$2,109,108
Republicans	235	26,097	\$6,132,985

Table 3.³⁵ Agribusiness Contributions to the Senate

Senate	# of Members	Avg. Contributions	Total Contributions
Democrats	36	\$17,830	\$641,908
Republicans	51	\$49,270	2,512,798

7. Policy Implications

The current campaign system has allowed more money to be used for campaigns and elections cycles there has been much discussion about the problems with allowing millions of dollars into elections. The policy implications of this study will focus more on regulatory motives as opposed to attacking financing. These policies implications will take a look at legislative action, USDA and DHHS policy. A government functions best when the executive and legislative branch work together. This does not mean the entire system should not be without concessions and debate. Nutrition policy should be based on science and keep politics out of the equation.

This paper has presented a history of interference by congress and even some within the agencies tasked with creating nutrition policy. These entities should allow the advisory committee to create the guidelines based on science, as the committee has attempted to do. Pushing a political agenda into a historically scientific process does not allow for the most effective policies to be implemented. Nutrition science is not perfect and this is the case with most sciences. Science is always evolving and changing to provide the most accurate information possible as not to mislead the public. Allowing this science to adapt and update the guidelines is more effective than making nutrition a political game.

This paper has rarely touched on the DHHS because outside of the minor work done on the DGA the department has little input on nutrition policy. However, DHHS can be utilized more for the research conducted through the Center for Disease Control, National Institute of Health and the Administration for Children and Families. These organizations do conduct studies on obesity and diets. The programs can do more to update the public and use the resources available to continually present the most up to date science. The Children and Families program can heavily influence consumer decision by working with the communities to create and understand healthier opportunities. This research can be invaluable to consumers as the large mess of information out there can be confusing at times. Returning *Dietary Guidelines* and nutrition policy to DHHS would give the dietary advice more credibility as the group is designed for health issues. The DHHS has the science background that would be a valuable resource to nutrition advice. DHHS work on obesity and diabetes prevalence has placed diet related illnesses in the spotlight. Researching the issues more is still important to further the cause. The information that is held within the department allows a better internal communication than can be difficult within the bureaucracy.

8. Conclusion

Nutrition policy is crucial to creating a healthier society that is adequately informed on food choices. The current nutrition policy is in a state of disarray as interest groups continue to input ideas. Inputting ideas is what creates a democratic society. However, interest groups are currently out for profit even when it is against the public good. Diet related diseases have been increasing over the last 30 years and thus are making nutrition policy even more important to the common citizen. Food Industry has begun to utilize even more strategies to influence legislation and executive branch on nutrition policy.

Food industry does not solely rely on lobbying the USDA and DHHS. Congress is a tool that the food industry utilizes often. The food industry has given close to \$200 million to Political Action Committees and Congressional members over the last three years.³⁶ Billion dollar companies spend large sums of money because it pays off in the long run. Congressional members often pass legislation that favors industry. The most recent cases involving the appropriations bill that interfered with school nutrition programs and dietary guidelines. Industry contributions overwhelmingly go towards conservative groups and Republican Party members. Trade organizations utilize funding levels to gain congressional members favorability.

Nutrition policy, in theory, was designed to promote the healthiest and most effective diet possible. Once industry started to lobby and alter the course of policy the usefulness of it went away. The most effective government is one that protects the people and makes lives better. During a time when the health of this country is a growing concern and healthcare costs are increasing.³⁷ Nutrition policy should avoid industry favoritism and focus on the people. Current trends in obesity will put the American public in harms way. Some estimates state that by 2030 half of all Americans will be obese.³⁸ The United States has become compromised as politics are now overshadowing the work of scientists. Nutritionists do not argue that nutrition science is perfect. No science is, because it is always evolving to give better advice. However, to ignore the current information behind the nutrition science is to roll back the small progress that has been made.³⁹ The progress is minimal and only in some states. Even minor changes gives rise of optimism that the United States can reduce obesity countrywide. The current state of nutrition policy is looking more and more to destroy the hope that exists. Food Industry can be apart of the discussion as the products sold are directly linked to them. Working with industry can be effective if there is an actual commitment to help the public. The USDA must demonize aspects of this industry if progress is to continue. The public seems to understand the damage that soda and junk food can have on their weight. The federal government does not wish to address this because of fear from the food industry. The first step towards a sound nutrition policy is to reign in food industry and single out foods that have caused the health problems today.



Figure 1⁴⁰

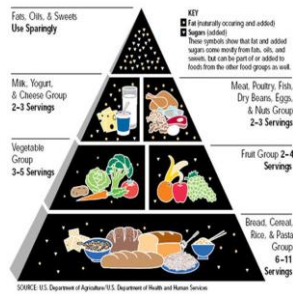


Figure 2.⁴¹

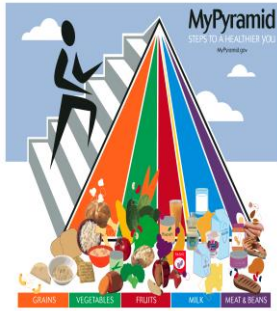


Figure 3.⁴²



Figure 4.⁴³

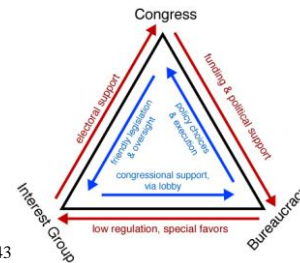


Figure 5.⁴⁴

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10. Endnotes

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