

# John Hoeven



202 • 224 • 2551

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
May 1, 2017

Contact: Kami Capener or Alex Finken  
[Kami.Capener@hoeven.senate.gov](mailto:Kami.Capener@hoeven.senate.gov)

## HOEVEN: FUNDING AGREEMENT PROVIDES FLEXIBILITY IN SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

### Senator Included Language in FY17 Funding Bill to Ease Whole Grain & Sodium Standards, Secured Commitment from Secretary Perdue to Address Concerns of School Nutrition Professionals

WASHINGTON – Senator John Hoeven, chairman of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations Committee and a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, today announced that he secured language in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 funding agreement that provides schools with greater flexibility in meeting the whole grains and sodium requirements under the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) school meal programs.

“The language included in the funding agreement will provide schools with much-needed flexibility in complying with USDA’s whole grains and sodium requirements,” said Hoeven. “This is important for our schools that are experiencing financial hardship in meeting these requirements. By providing this flexibility, we are helping school nutrition professionals serve healthy meals to students, while also reducing costs for schools and preventing food waste.”

- **WHOLE GRAINS:** Under current regulations, all grains offered with school meals must be whole grain-rich – down to the croutons on the fresh salad bar. Hoeven’s provision allows schools facing hardships to receive a waiver from the 100 percent whole grain-rich requirements for the 2017-2018 School Year. Additionally, states would be required to establish a process for evaluating and responding to requests for an exemption in a reasonable amount of time. The senator continues working with USDA to provide longer-term flexibility for schools struggling with product availability or facing unreasonable cost increases due to the requirements.
- **SODIUM:** Over the last two years, schools have made great strides in reducing sodium to meet Target 1 sodium levels. However, school nutrition professionals have warned that lower sodium targets, which were set to take effect on July 1, 2017, would push many healthy options off the menu, due in part to naturally occurring sodium in foods. Under the Hoeven-authored language, schools will not be required to meet the lower sodium levels this coming school year.

In addition, Hoeven successfully included language in the funding bill that seeks to reduce the administrative burden that USDA places on school nutrition professionals. The provision funds a study to identify ways to consolidate and better coordinate the reporting requirements under the Child Nutrition Programs, with the goal of reducing duplication.

Hoeven also secured a commitment from Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue during his recent [confirmation](#) process to work with the senator, school nutrition professionals and school districts to ensure that they have the necessary flexibility to both meet their budgets and serve nutritious meals that students will eat.