Talking Points on DGA 2015 Appropriations Riders in Agriculture and Labor/HHS Bills

The DGAC Report Recommendations are Already Supported by Ample Science

- The 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee put forth their Report using the best methodological practices known to the scientific community. These scientists, not an appropriations committee, should decide what constitutes appropriate scientific process.
- The 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee Scientific Report was developed over 24 months and underwent a notice and comment period. Now, at this late stage in the process, riders would undercut the entire purpose of convening the Committee to review new science and make recommendations by gagging the recommendations the DGA 2015 can consider.
- The rider requirements rob Americans of information and advice agreed upon by a scientific body convened for the purpose of putting forth recommendations based on the best science available. The Agriculture and HHS Departments convened this Committee of scientists for their expertise, yet the riders over-ride the Committee's expert judgment as to which recommendations are appropriate. The appropriations committee should not second-guess this determination.

The Riders Are Anti-Science

- These riders are not grounded in scientific practice and undermine the purpose, public health goals and process of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. They impose antiscientific limitations on what was intended to be a science-based analysis of best diet and health practices.
- The rider provisions would effectively leave the DGA frozen in time at the point of the 2010 recommendations by limiting the scope of which science the 2015 DGA can consider, no matter what the evolving science supports. Only a handful of new recommendations in the 2015 Report meet both the 'strong' and 'diet and nutrient intake' requirements, which are arbitrary and far too limiting.
- The riders play politics with science, using the appropriations process to undermine what should be a scientific endeavor to find the best diet and lifestyle practices for public health. The language of the rider is deceptively innocuous, hiding sweeping limitations to Guidelines recommendations behind 'strong' rating language, when such a limit aligns with neither common scientific practice nor past Guidelines practice.
- The rider provisions would create scientific inconsistency between previous versions of the DGA and the latest 2015 Guidelines. Previous Guidelines including the most recent 2010 edition made recommendations based on 'Moderate' or 'Limited' evidence. Had this rider been in effect in 2010, many DGA 2010 recommendations would have been excluded, including such common-sense advice as restricting sedentary time in front of the television and reducing fast-food intake.

The Riders Would not Allow Updates to Diet and Exercise Recommendations

- Despite the two-thirds of Americans currently overweight or obese and the half of Americans with chronic diet-related illnesses, the rider would prohibit the DGA from upgrading its advice on diet and physical activity to reflect the growing body of evidence that a nutrient-dense diet and exercise reduce the risk of disease. This would rob the American public of powerful incentives to change their diet or exercise habits.
- The riders would randomly excise from the Guidelines critical information about our evolving scientific understanding linking chronic disease and diet.
- The 2015 DGA would be barred from updating any of the 2010 advice on physical activity regardless of advances in science regarding health implications for disease, disability and different age groups.

The Riders Would Prevent the DGA From Issuing Common-Sense Recommendations and Information

- The "diet and nutrient intake" restriction would nonsensically bar the DGA from giving practical advice, such as using family meal times to role model healthy behavior or suggesting that federal food assistance programs counsel families on how to select healthy foods within their budgets.
- The "diet and nutrient intake" requirement would senselessly bar the 2015 DGA from informing disabled people or Americans over 65 of the particular benefits they might gain from exercising.

The Riders Would Exclude Any New Policy Recommendations or Implementation Advice

- The requirement that recommendations be made only relating to "matters of diet and nutrient intake" is extremely and erroneously limiting. Any new policy recommendations for implementing dietary or fitness recommendations even advice crucial to actually realizing the recommended changes to the American diet would not be allowed by this requirement.
- The 2010 Guidelines recommend that Americans restrict added sugars, and the 2015 Report builds on this recommendation with strong evidence that added sugars should make up less than 10% of daily calories. The rider "diet and nutrient intake" requirement would muffle the impact of these findings by not allowing the 2015 Guidelines to recommend more prominent labeling of added sugars or propose policy initiatives to incentivize decreased consumption of added sugars.
- The rider would exclude all unrated recommendations in the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Scientific Report. These unrated recommendations are based on data analyses of diet and disease, and include policy suggestions for implementing dietary advice, such as advice that manufacturers and food vendors reformulate foods to include less sodium and saturated fat and recommendations to local governments to provide free water in public places.