

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The House of Representatives voted tonight in favor of restoring food stamp benefits to legal permanent residents by a vote of 244-171.

The vote was on a motion to instruct conferees to include the Senate-passed provisions to restore food stamps in the Farm Security Act. These provisions, which passed in the Senate version of the Farm Bill on February 7 by a vote of 96-1, were blocked by House GOP conferees on April 10. Following this disturbing decision Representative Joe Baca (CA - 42) submitted a motion calling on the conferees to include the Senate provisions in the final bill that will be sent to President Bush. The motion was introduced and debated on the House floor last Thursday, April 18, with the vote being postponed until today.

Representative Xavier Becerra (CA - 30), a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, voted for the motion citing the important role food stamps play in child development. "None of us wants to see a child go to school malnourished," Rep. Becerra said.

Congress stripped legal permanent residents of their eligibility to collect food stamps when it passed the 1996 welfare reform bill. Since then, many House Democrats, including Rep. Becerra, have worked tirelessly to restore those benefits.

During last week's floor debate, Rep. Becerra highlighted those who would benefit from the restoration of food stamp provisions. "Remember that the families we are seeking to assist depend on breadwinners who have not yet become citizens, but have been here working hard and

honorably for quite some time," Rep. Becerra said. "Unfortunately, because 42 percent of legal permanent residents work in jobs that pay \$7.50 an hour or less, they struggle financially - they do not get benefits, they have no health care, and many children suffer as a result.

"Let us do right by them. Let us make sure we do not make them have to miss a rent payment to feed their kids. We should never undermine the ability to help families who are working."

Upon passage of the motion, Rep. Becerra said, "This has been long overdue. Indeed, these benefits should have never even been taken away in the first place."