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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 30, 1995

**SANDERS BLASTS "CONTRACT'S" PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT:
SAYS VT SENIORS WILL SUFFER DEVASTATING CUTS TO FOOD PROGRAMS**

Rep. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., today blasted a provision in the GOP "Contract with America" known as the Personal Responsibility Act, saying the measure could result in the elimination of the Meals on Wheels program in Vermont.

Sanders, flanked by seniors advocates at a Burlington news conference, said the program, which provides meals for more than 4,000 Vermont seniors, is in jeopardy of losing funding due to federal spending cuts proposed by the Republican leadership.

Sanders said, "If the Contract with America goes through, the total federal nutrition program support to Vermont could drop by \$10 million by 1996. All federal nutrition programs would be rolled up into a single nutrition block grant to the states."

He continued, "It is my fear that we will then see state nutrition programs battling for block grant funding. The obscenity of this is that we may see a terrible conflict between people wanting to feed hungry children and people wanting to feed hungry seniors. Meals on Wheels could be a resulting casualty."

Sanders noted that Federal Administration on Aging funding of \$1.5 million for congregate and home-delivered meals for seniors would also be eliminated under the Republicans' proposal. Sanders said Vermont could also lose an additional \$2 million in Federal food commodities now going to Vermont families, soup kitchens and schools.

Council on Vermont Elders President Pat Burnham said, "These programs are absolutely essential to people to be able to be sure that their lives have pieces that stay in place so that they can remain independent, and so they can remain contributors to society rather than takers of society."

Champlain Senior Center Director Syndi Zook added, "The feeding programs are the basis of what is important in America. America has always said, 'We can feed all of our folks.' And here they are tampering with what I feel is a fundamental program in the American system -- a feeding program for senior citizens."

Sanders said, "These programs are enormously cost-effective in terms of the health and well being of America's senior citizens. And it is an absolute vulgarity to talk about huge increases in military spending, and major tax breaks for the wealthiest people in America, at the same time as we are talking about cutting back on nutritional programs for senior citizens. I will do everything in my power to prevent these cuts from taking place."

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