

THE GRADUATE COLLEGE OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

ANNOUNCES THE FINAL EXAMINATION OF

Regina Greuel Cook

FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE
GRADUATE COLLEGE
Department of Health Promotion Sciences



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College of Public Health Building, Room 144

OBESEITY CONCEPTUALIZATIONS IN THE MOST AND LEAST
OBESE STATES: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF STATE OBESEITY
LEGISLATION RELATED TO THE FOOD ENVIRONMENT

COMMITTEE IN CHARGE: *Thomas A. Teasdale, DrPH, Chair, Janis Campbell, PhD,
Marshall Cheney, PhD, Karla Finnell, Ph.D., JD, Amir Khaliq, PhD, Diane Warren, PhD*

ABSTRACT: Obesity is a detrimental health problem affecting more than one-third of U.S population. While the causal mechanisms of obesity are greatly debated, obesity is considered a preventable disease affected by calorie intake and usage. Many interventions, particularly at the individual-level, have failed to effectively address obesity. Policy has been indicated as a potentially effective, cost-efficient, and population-wide strategy. Using qualitative methods this study explored differences in legislation related to nutrition and food from the five least and five most obese states and conceptualizations of obesity via legislation. Using the CDC Chronic Disease State Policy Tracking System database and specific sample parameters, 47 pieces of legislation from the years 2001-2014 met the criteria for study inclusion. Coding was grounded in the data but also included a priori codes aligned with policy recommendations from the NOURISHING framework. Results from the analysis showed a focus on Children and social-ecological framing in legislation from both the least and most obese states; however, legislation from the least obese state was more inclusive of various populations, included more diverse Legislative Outputs, and tended to more saliently conceptualize obesity as environmentally-influenced. Legislation from the most obese states more frequently contained pervasive use of Passive Legislative Outputs, economic motivating factors, and tended to prescribe more individual-level interventions even in conjunction with language aligned to social-ecological framing. Legislative Outputs focused on influencing food access was commonly used by both the least and most obese states, but applied to different Priority Populations and using different approaches.