

Let's Get Physical

By Reg P. Wydeven
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Yoga is the hottest exercise trend today. In the 1990s, tai chi was all the rage. In the 70s, jogging was the newest craze. But in the 1980s, aerobics was not only an exercise fad, but a fashion statement as well.

Headbands, wristbands, spandex leotards, tights and leg warmers were the required uniform. Jane Fonda pioneered the exercise home video. Olivia Newton-John even had a hit song about it (with serious romantic undertones).

But the best fashion accessory was the sequined tank top made famous by "Sweatin' to the Oldies" star Richard Simmons. A high-octane, frizzy-haired goofball, Simmons was passionate about helping people get into shape.

A quarter century later, Simmons is just as passionate about helping people lose weight. He's shifted his focus, however, from seniors to children. Every chance he gets, Simmons pleads for Americans to write to their Congressman to pass the Fitness Integrated with Teach Kids Act.

Known as the FIT Kids Act, the law is designed to combat our nation's childhood obesity epidemic. In 2004, over 9 million kids ages 6 to 19 were considered overweight. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that by 2010, 20% of American children will be obese. Overweight adolescents have a 70% chance of becoming overweight adults.

With unprecedented budget cuts in education, 92% of elementary schools currently don't provide daily PE classes that meet national goals year-round and just over 25% of high school students take daily PE classes.

If enacted, the FIT Kids Act would amend the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act to require that all schools, districts and states include the quantity and quality of physical education in students' report cards. The FIT Kids Act would help schools work towards the national goal of 150 minutes of PE per week for elementary school students and 225 minutes per week for students in middle and high schools. It would also ensure that children get the support they need to be active and make healthy food choices.

So take Richard's advice and exercise your right to contact your Congressman about passing the FIT Kids Act.