

Hunger Advocacy News

Anti-hunger legislation and advocacy updates from the Food Bank



Spring 2010

Advocacy Agenda

Call Your Congressperson Day

Food Bank Executive Director Suzan Bateson and Advocacy Manager Betsy Edwards will be in Washington, D.C. discussing the importance of children gaining access to healthy meals through the programs under the umbrella of the 2010 Child Nutrition Reauthorization. Please target this date to call the district office of your congressperson and join us in the campaign for better school meals.

Barbara Lee – (510) 763-0370
(Albany, Berkeley, Castro Valley, Emeryville, Oakland, Piedmont)

Jerry McNerney – (925) 737-0727
(Dublin, Pleasanton, Sunol)

Pete Stark – (510) 494-1388
(Alameda, Fremont, Hayward, Newark, San Leandro, San Lorenzo, Union City)

John Garamendi – (925) 757-7187
(Livermore)



Community Advocacy Trainings

While these trainings will be geared towards *Hunger Action Day* participants, they are open to anyone hoping to learn more about state anti-hunger advocacy. The trainings will be very similar to each other so there is no need to come to both ... but please attend one! Tools of the trade and meals will be provided.

April 28

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

May 12

4 – 7 p.m.

Hunger Action Day

This free annual road trip to Sacramento is the highlight of the 2010 advocacy calendar. *Hunger Action Day* gives advocates the opportunity to meet their state legislators face-to-face, personalizing the anti-hunger campaign message for our elected officials. A light breakfast and lunch is provided by the Food Bank.

May 19

Bus leaves 7:30 a.m.
Bus returns by 5:30 p.m.

To RSVP for any of these events, contact Betsy Edwards at bedwards@accfb.org or (510) 635-3663 ext. 307.

Taking a Bite Out of California's Budget Crisis with Food Stamps

By Ross Steinborn, Advocacy & Research Associate

As déjà vu strikes Sacramento—with a budget deficit to the tune of \$20 billion, political impasse and the state quickly running out of money—the governor is trying to come up with ideas to solve the fiscal crisis. One idea is asking the federal government for funds to stave off extreme cuts to health and human service programs. This tactic seems like a longshot; many federal lawmakers, including Senator Diane Feinstein, are saying California won't get that much money from Washington, D.C.

In the meantime, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger is leaving billions of federal dollars on the table in lost food stamp benefits. California consistently has one of the worst food stamp participation rates in the nation. In Alameda County alone, \$98 million more in food stamp revenue would be forthcoming from the federal government if every eligible person was enrolled in the Food Stamp Program. Because the money goes directly into the local economy, it creates what the USDA calls a "multiplier effect." This effect generates \$1.84 in economic activity for every dollar in benefits. So if we apply this multiplier locally, Alameda County is leaving \$180 million on the table, every year ... from the Food Stamp Program alone.

The state's ongoing budget crisis is a case of history repeating itself. This time around, the legislature should try a new approach: invest in families instead of disinvesting in safety-net programs. California should expand access to the Food Stamp Program, which would cost the state very little while supporting struggling families and putting billions of federal dollars into local economies.

One way to accomplish this is to remove the obvious barriers to food stamps, chief among them being the fingerprint imaging requirement. It's not only ineffective, but stigmatizing for applicants. Food Bank Executive Director Suzan Bateson told the governor as much in a personal aside during his media-barraged tour of our facilities on Dec. 10.

Yet another means to increase access is to alter the current system of reporting for food stamp recipients. California is the last state still clinging to a quarterly reporting period; the rest of the nation only requires recipients to re-file for benefits semi-annually.

We know that expanding the Food Stamp Program won't solve all of the state's budget problems. But taking steps that economically empower the people and families of California seems a good place to start.

California Legislators Roll Out Food/Hunger Bills

The Assembly (AB) and Senate (SB) bills for the 2010-11 California legislative session have now been introduced. The Food Bank's advocacy staff is keeping an eye on the following bills and formulating its policy strategy.

The name attached to each bill indicates its author.

AB 1914 *Mike Davis (D – Los Angeles)*

Public Social Services: Emergency Food Stamps

Requires the state to provide emergency food stamp benefits to those waiting for their unemployment benefits or an extension of unemployment benefits to become available.

AB 1198 *Sandre Swanson (D – Oakland)*

Food Stamps for Recovery

Fully removes lifetime ban on former drug felons who have gone through recovery.

AB 2018 *Nancy Skinner (D – Berkeley)*

Food Stamps: Inter-County Transfer (ICT) Study

A study to explore the annual cost savings that an ICT process for food stamp benefits that is consistent with the process for CalWORKs, IHSS and Medi-Cal may provide.

AB 2720 *John A. Perez (D – Los Angeles)*

Public Health: Food Justice

Provides recommendations to the legislature regarding actions that need to be taken to promote food justice in the state.

SB 963 *Tom Ammiano (D – San Francisco)*

Medi-Cal and Food Stamps

This bill creates an advisory committee to make recommendations to align reporting and recertification processes for Medi-Cal and Food Stamps.

SB 1359 *Curren Price (D – Los Angeles)*

Public Social Services: Food Stamps

Moves to semiannual reporting for the Food Stamp program. Forgoes fingerprint imaging and asset tests for food stamp applicants

SB 1453 *Curren Price (D – Los Angeles)*

CalWORKs and Food Stamps

Reforms fingerprinting, asset limitation and reporting requirements under the CalWORKs program and the Food Stamp Program.

2010 Child Nutrition Reauthorization: Weighing in on Health

By Betsy Edwards, Advocacy Manager

Sixty-two years before presidential candidate Barack Obama pledged to end childhood hunger, President Harry S. Truman signed the National School Lunch Act. As Truman noted, “no nation is any healthier than its children or more prosperous than its farmers.”

Although the program began as a piecemeal effort to help absorb farm surpluses, it was eventually signed into law because many young men were being turned away from draft physicals for reasons related to malnutrition in their childhood. How times have changed. First Lady Michelle Obama recently noted that obesity – another sign of poor nutrition – is now among the most common cause of disqualification for military service.

The National School Lunch Program is by far the most utilized program under the Child Nutrition umbrella. In Alameda County, for example, 65% of students who are eligible for free and reduced-price payments are participating in the program.

Although severely underutilized, the Summer Food Services Program has proven to be an effective nutrition bridge while school is on hiatus. With no registration requirements, children simply show up at open sites and have lunch. Some 100,000 meals were distributed in Oakland alone last summer.



Every five years, the programs in the Child Nutrition Act are reviewed by Congress and advocates alike to make sure that they function as intended. This is an opportunistic time for everyone concerned with the well-being of the millions of children that use the school breakfast, school lunch, after-school snack or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

The 2010 Child Nutrition Reauthorization is now upon us.

President Obama, with an eye toward his campaign goal of ending childhood hunger by 2015, has pledged to add \$1 billion a year to these programs. It's an essential start.

But it might not be enough to trigger the paradigm shift that is necessary to increase access and upgrade the nutritional quality of these meals in order to meet our Chief Executive's timeline.

In the past 64 years, we as a nation have made considerable inroads to becoming the healthy nation that President Truman envisioned when he signed the National School Lunch program into law. But only true reform to the child nutrition programs will render us capable of boasting about our nation's health.

Join the Alameda County Community Food Bank's advocacy team to help promote – and reform – the 2010 Child Nutrition Reauthorization. Contact Advocacy Manager Betsy Edwards at bedwards@acafb.org or (510) 635-3663 ext. 307.

Become an anti-hunger advocate: Contact Betsy Edwards at (510) 635-3663 ext. 307 or bedwards@acafb.org