



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

This message is being sent to network public policy personnel.

### MAY 2015

While the recession may be over, the number of Americans still struggling with this basic need remains unchanged. Hunger is a symptom of lack of resources. **Unemployment, low wages, and high housing costs have been identified as the major causes of hunger.** The problem of hunger here is compounded given New Jersey's high cost of living. In addition, cuts to the benefit level of those already receiving assistance further threaten New Jersey households. Continuing to strengthen and support federal nutrition programs is more important than ever. Summary of important legislation follows.

#### **The Budget Process Continues in Washington ...**

While legislation like the Farm Bill sets the framework and policy for important programs like commodity assistance (TEFAP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), these programs go through a budget and appropriations process every year. In recent years, because of the contentious debate over deficits these programs continually come under fire.

**The Good News:** The end of April, the House and Senate passed a budget resolution. While the House originally had detailed instructions on specific cuts to the Agricultural budget that would be particularly harmful to SNAP, these instructions did not make it into the final resolution.

**The Bad News:** Nevertheless, the budget resolution assumes significant cuts but does not provide much detail on which programs will be targeted. Advocates should be prepared to continue to push back against cuts to SNAP and other nutrition programs during the appropriations process throughout the summer. September 30, 2015 is the fiscal year deadline.

**ACTION:** Join the End Hunger in America – Stories from Across Our Nation Project

It is important to continue to lay the ground work for educating our elected officials on the importance of our federal nutrition programs and put a face on the people who benefit from federal nutrition program. There is now a free and easy-to-use tool for collecting stories. The StoryCorps app allows you to record interviews right from your phone. StoryCorps will serve as a great national repository for stories that highlight the scope of hunger in America and the solutions that exist to solve it. All recorded interviews will be archived in the Library of Congress. For a StoryCorps training toolkit, email [cbsutton@frac.org](mailto:cbsutton@frac.org). Follow this link <https://storycorps.me/> to find out more or <https://storycorps.me/keywords/endhunger/> to listen to the stories already collected.

#### **Support Federal Tax Incentives to Encourage Food Donations:**

Congress is considering legislation that would expand tax deductions for farmers, ranchers, and businesses for giving food to food banks and make them a permanent part of the tax code. The America Gives More Act (HR 644) has already passed the House. The Senate has introduced similar legislation (S. 930, the Good Samaritan Hunger Relief Tax Incentive Act) and we are fighting to get it passed in the Senate and sent to the President for his signature. This legislation would have a significant impact on our ability to secure more local food.

**ACTION:** Sign on to the Feeding America **organizational letter** that will be sent to the Senate urging them to finish the job and pass the tax incentive bill. <http://bit.ly/1F2tCks>

### **State Updates:**

For the first time there is an opportunity to support State tax credit incentives. A4189 allows a NJ gross income tax deduction for charitable contributions of food made from business inventory. Senators Lesniak and Kyrillos are sponsoring the bill in the Senate. The bills now move to the appropriations committee. The Community FoodBank will be monitoring the bill closely for actionable opportunities.

### **Improved Child Nutrition Programs**

Child Nutrition Programs will be federally reauthorized in 2015. House and Senate committees are working on a child nutrition bill. Ensuring that every member of congress understands our legislative priorities and the impact they will have on our state and district is important.

### **Child Nutrition Reauthorization Policy Recommendations**

- Strengthen States' Ability to Reach Kids During the Summer and weekends
- Streamline Regulations for Community Based Providers
- Leverage Schools Beyond the School Day
- Strengthen Access and Quality in School Meal Programs and WIC

**ACTION:** Sign on to the Feeding America **organizational letter** that supports these important priorities: <http://bit.ly/1Excv74>

**More Action to Come:** Feeding American is hosting a National CNR Call to Action Day **June 24** which will include opportunities to join a call-in day and virtual town hall.

### **State Update:**

Sadly in New Jersey child nutrition programs are seriously under-utilized. The school breakfast program, for instance, provides free or reduced-price breakfasts for children in need. It has a proven track record of enhancing academic performance and improving child health behavior. Despite the progress made in recently years, of the 519,000 New Jersey students eligible for school breakfast, only 41% received it leaving 308,000 children unserved and millions of dollars in federal funds on the table.

Advocates support the expansion of School Breakfast both fiscally and administratively. By investing state funds to reinstate supplemental funding, New Jersey can provide fiscal incentives to adopt a "breakfast after the bell" policies in each district. Legislation **A4030 and S2669** establishes a "breakfast after the bell" incentive fund of .10 cents per meal and is moving through committees. For further information on particular utilization your school district visit Advocates for Children in New Jersey <http://acnj.org/school-breakfast/>

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