



### take five

(actions that take five minutes or less)

This month's Advocacy Alert is full of information about important federal and state legislation that can improve the lives of those who struggle against hunger and food insecurity. Your voice can make a difference and this is a critical period to speak out. The Oregon Legislature is nearing conclusion and farm bill reauthorization is moving quickly in the U.S. Congress.

Please choose an issue that is important to you or someone you know and call your lawmakers to convey your support. Better yet, choose two or three. Imagine the satisfaction of investing 10 – 15 minutes in the fight against hunger.

Oregon Legislative toll-free number: 1-800-332-2313  
U.S. Capitol switchboard: 1-202-225-3121

### Legislative Yellow Pages

**State Legislative Information**  
1-800-332-2313 (outside Salem)  
(503) 986-1000 (in Salem)  
[www.leg.state.or.us/citizenguide](http://www.leg.state.or.us/citizenguide)

### Members of Congress

Senator Smith  
(503) 326-3386  
Senator Wyden  
(503) 326-7525  
Rep. Wu (District 1)  
(503) 326-2901  
Rep. Walden (District 2)  
(541) 776-4646  
Rep. Blumenauer (District 3)  
(503) 231-2300  
Rep. DeFazio (District 4)  
(541) 465-6732  
Rep. Hooley (District 5)  
(503) 588-9100

## Key bills await final action in Oregon

On May 15, the Oregon Legislature received the latest revenue forecast for the coming two-year budget period. It was good news but not great. Overall, the forecast now projects \$152 million more available for the coming biennium than had been projected in the previous forecast. While this certainly is real money, it is not going to pay for all the human services programs that need restoration from budget cuts made during the recession.

Here is a brief bill-by-bill update of key measures supported by Oregon Food

Bank and the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force. We encourage you to contact your state legislators and ask them to support these important measures.

### ✓HB 2871 — 36 percent cap on consumer loans

Bright and early on May 21, the state Capitol was packed with payday and car-title loan employees who had been brought in to oppose House Bill 2871. Jonas Monast, our ally at the Center for Responsible Lending was also there, having traveled from North Carolina to testify in favor of the bill. He told us, "This is exactly what

they've done in other states that try to regulate them — even down to the green neon stickers (worn by opponents)."

The hearing in the Senate Commerce Committee lasted about an hour. Speaker Jeff Merkley came in to testify in favor of his bill and to urge its swift passage. Oregon Food Bank and the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force submitted testimony along with Our Oregon and many of our anti-hunger partners.

The legislation's opponents are trying to split the package of bills in the Senate in

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## Food stamp challenge fuels farm bill

Several weeks have passed since the Oregon food stamp challenge yet it continues to have an impact. Governor Ted Kulongoski, Oregon Food Bank Network, Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force, and everyone who participated in the food stamp challenge have been recognized by national advocacy organizations. "The national media environment is hot right now for food stamps thanks to the Oregon food stamp challenge," said Colleen Pawling of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), in Washington, D.C.

Inspired by Oregon, U.S. Reps. James McGovern (D-MA) and Jo Ann Emer-

son (R-MO) issued a food stamp challenge to the entire U.S. House of Representatives. States across the country are organizing their own challenges. The Food Stamp Program is on the national radar—and we played a large part in putting it there.

The timing couldn't be better, as farm bill reauthorization is underway in Congress. The federal budget will be the biggest challenge to improvements in the nutrition title—the portion of the farm bill that includes the Food Stamp Program and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). However, war spending and the Congressional pay-as-you-

go rules have severely limited available funds for the farm bill. House and Senate negotiators recently agreed on a budget resolution that includes \$20 billion in deficit-neutral reserve funds for the farm bill. This means that lawmakers must find budget offsets to use that money.

But all is not lost. The farm bill reauthorization took a significant step forward with the introduction of House Resolution (H.R.) 2129. The Feeding America's Families Act, introduced on May 3 by Reps. McGovern and Emerson, offers the most direct opportunity yet for new investment in the nutrition

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# Key bills await final action

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an attempt to undermine the interest rate cap. We continue to work for the entire package of reform bills. House Bills 2871, 2203, 2204 and 2205 have all passed the House and await action by the Senate. Please contact your senator and ask that HB 2871 be passed in its current form.

**✓HB 3139 — Reinstate General Assistance**  
House Bill 3139 recreates Oregon's General Assistance program to provide temporary bridge funding to Oregonians while they apply for federal benefits under Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

SSDI provides benefits to disabled or blind individuals who qualify for benefits based generally on work history. In contrast, SSI provides benefits to low-income disabled, blind, or senior citizens, and typically there is no work requirement. To qualify for SSI an

applicant must have low or no income and minimal resources.

HB 3139 passed its original House committee and is now in the Ways and Means Committee.

**✓HB 2469 — Strengthen the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program**  
House Bill 2469 was amended in House committee to include several important new provisions. The bill includes an up-front assessment of TANF applicants, a family SSI track, increased pass-throughs of child support payments, and up to \$150 a month for up to a year as a supplement to clients that secure employment.

HB 2469 has gone to Ways and Means where critical decisions about funding will be made. This bill is estimated to cost \$25 million, \$20 million of which is in proposed budgets.

**✓HB 3551 — Increase funding for affordable housing**  
This bill proposes to increase funding for affordable housing by \$35 million through an increase in the document recording fee used during real estate transactions.

As we reported last month in Advocacy Alert, The Housing Alliance, this proposal's chief proponent, overcame long odds just to get HB 3551 introduced into the legislative debate. The language in HB 3551 is taken from an earlier version of the bill, SB 38. HB 3551 has had two hearings before Ways and Means.

**✓HB 2634 — Expand the senior farmers' market coupon program**  
House Bill 2634 would add to the value of farmers' market coupons for eligible seniors. Even though this program provides relatively small benefits, it gives seniors improved

access to fresh produce while helping support local farmers and is a good step forward.

HB 2634 passed out of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and is now before the Ways and Means Committee.

**✓HB 2288 — Statewide Food Policy Council**  
This bill would improve local food systems by increasing collaboration between farmers, consumers and food institutions. Oregon would join a host of other states to focus policy changes that would improve regional food systems. HB 2288 was in the governor's budget; however, funding was eliminated in the Ways and Means co-chairs' budget. Please ask your legislator to support HB 2288 and the funding needed to staff the council.

See this month's 'take five'.

The Advocacy Alert is published jointly by Oregon Food Bank (OFB) and the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force (OHRTF).

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title. H.R. 2129 would make substantial improvements in the Food Stamp Program by:

- Raising benefits in four steps to 103 percent of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP)
- Increasing the standard deduction and indexing it for inflation
- Raising the minimum benefit from \$10 a month to 20 percent of the TFP for a one-person household
- Increasing resource limits from the current \$2,000 per household and \$3,000 for a household with an elderly person to \$3,700 and

\$5,500, respectively

- Augmenting income exclusions for retirement and education expenses
- Simplifying work, eligibility, and reporting requirements, and
- Providing increased funding for outreach grants.

H.R. 2129 would also provide a direct appropriation of \$250 million for mandatory TEFAP food purchases in fiscal year 2008, up from the current \$140 million, and index TEFAP funding to inflation annually. In addition, H.R. 2129 would increase the annual ceiling for TEFAP

storage and distribution funds from \$60 million to \$100 million.

H.R. 2129 needs your support! Please call your representative and two senators today. Call (202) 225-3121 and ask the Capitol Switchboard operator to connect you to your member of Congress. If you don't know your representative or senator go to <http://tinyurl.com/2t6k9w>. Tell your member of Congress to please make sure that the 2007 farm bill makes new investments in the nutrition title.