



ADVOCACY ALERT



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Oregon Food Bank
Oregon Hunger Task Force

Wrap-up on 2009 legislative session

Here is a short recap on 2009 legislative successes. These bills were supported by Oregon Food Bank, the Oregon Hunger Task Force (OHTF) and partner organizations throughout the state. Thank you for playing an important role in turning these bills into laws during an extremely challenging legislative session.

Successes—

- School breakfast co-pay: \$2.3 million in state funding is provided so that children whose families make up to 185% of poverty will receive free breakfast at school.
- Health care for children and more adults: Provides health care coverage for an additional 80,000 children and 35,000 low-income adults.
- Affordable housing: A document recording fee will provide a dedicated funding source for affordable housing and raise \$15 million in this budget period and more in the future.
- To assist the Oregon Food Bank Network with expanding needs

for food acquisition, to help cover rising fuel costs, and build state-wide capacity. The General Fund Food Program allocation was continued at \$2 million for the two-year budget cycle.

- Funding for WIC and seniors farmers' market coupons: This program supports farmers' markets and Oregon agriculture by providing eligible seniors and WIC participants with coupons to be spent at farmers' markets. This program was preserved at its current funding level after proposals to cut it by more than \$200,000.
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs that had been looked at for cuts were preserved, including:
 - Pre-TANF payments for living expenses.
 - Two-parent family program.
 - Enhanced grants for pre-SSI/SSDI clients.
 - Family support and connections.
 - \$10 million in JOBS funding.
 - Parents as Scholars

In addition the OHTF was successful in support of:

- Unemployment Insurance: A change to include more of a worker's most-recent work experience will qualify about 6,000 more people for benefits and allow Oregon to access \$91 million in federal stimulus dollars.

More work needed— Advocates will regroup and keep other issues alive that did not pass, including:

- Expansion of Oregon's earned income tax credit (EITC) to 18% of the federal level. Improving the Oregon EITC would supplement the wages of working families, especially those with children, helping them get ahead.
- Restoring Oregon's General Assistance (GA) program would provide a bridge for individuals applying for federal Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability benefits.



take five

(actions that take five minutes or less)

Message: 2-1-1 hotline in Congress

2-1-1, the three digit number for health and human services, is available to 50 percent of Oregon's population with service provided by 211info, a nonprofit based in Portland. Congress has the potential to support 2-1-1 expansion.

The Calling for 2-1-1 Act (S. 211) would authorize \$150 million for two years and \$100 million for years three to five to help implement and sustain 2-1-1 nationwide.

Currently, 211info operates the 2-1-1 hotline for seven Oregon counties and four Washington counties (services are funded by United Ways and local governments). In addition, it operates 1-800-SAFENET, a statewide hotline that provides health and food stamp information. In the last year, 211info handled more than 100,000 phone calls with the majority for basic needs such as rent/mortgage assistance, utility assistance and requests for emergency food.

Action:

Contact Senator Merkley and request that he co-sponsor S.211. Senator Wyden has already agreed to co-sponsor S.211. Call Senator Merkley at: (202) 224-3753.

For questions contact Liesl Wendt at: 503.416.2619, liesel@211info.org.

Together we can create a hunger-free Oregon

The Oregon Hunger Task Force along with Oregon Food Bank and many community partners are working together to create a plan to end hunger in Oregon.

In 2004, the task force collaborated with partners to develop the first five-year plan that included 40 strategies to impact hunger across the state. Known as the *Act to End Hunger*, the plan was designed to provide a common resource, a common language, and a common agenda for collective advocacy and action against hunger.

The plan had four main objectives: 1) increase family economic stability, 2) enhance community food security, 3) expand federal food programs, and 4) support emergency food services.

After successfully moving forward on 30 of the 40 original strategies, it is time to look ahead and ask the question, "What needs to change to create a hunger-free Oregon today and in the future?" We are gathering specific steps, policies, and actions that will inform the work of hunger and poverty advocates through 2014.

The new plan will include strategies for legislators, advocates, food banks,

businesses, educational and health institutions, and community members so that each one of us can be part of the solution. We need input from a wide range of voices so it includes actions for all people and places in Oregon.



Your voice is important

Your help is needed to make sure the next five-year plan reflects the needs of your community. Over the next several months, task force members and other partners will be hosting and attending community meetings across the state.

Here are some ways you can support this effort:

- Partner with us to host a community listening session.
- Help us access diverse, low-income communities.
- Contact us with stories about hunger and ideas you have for solutions.
- Invite us to meetings or forums in your area where people could talk about food, hunger, and changes we need for healthier communities.
- Join the project advisory group.

To join this exciting project or for more information, contact Sally Eliason at 503-595-5501 ext. 301 or sally@oregonhunger.org.

This project is funded by a grant from the Northwest Health Foundation.

Advocacy Alert survey

Last month we conducted an online survey as part of our efforts to improve the Advocacy Alert. We are looking at ways to make it more useful and effective. In the coming months we will let you know the outcome of this process. Thank you to everyone who filled out the survey. If you didn't get a chance last month your feedback is appreciated and you can find the survey here:

<http://tinyurl.com/ofbsurvey>

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

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Legislative Yellow Pages

State Legislative Information

1-800-332-2313 (outside Salem) 503-986-1000 (in Salem)

<http://www.leg.state.or.us/citizenguide/>

Federal Legislative Contacts

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