



**OREGON FOOD BANK
OREGON HUNGER RELIEF TASK FORCE**

Advocacy Alert

**February 2008
Volume 14 Issue 2**



take five

(actions that take five minutes or less)

Action:

Now is the time to let your state senator and representative know that you want legislation passed to help families and children during the February session. See the related article for details on four important bills. Then call your legislators at the toll-free number listed below.
1-800-332-2313

Message:

Please help Oregon families thrive by voting yes on four important bills:

- ✓ LC 79
- ✓ SB 1073
- ✓ SB 1090
- ✓ LC 62

These are critical measures to adopt, especially in the light of a likely downturn in the economy.

**Legislative
Yellow Pages**

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

The 2008 supplemental legislative session is upon us

The Legislature intends to work hard between now and February 29 to get all their work done before they adjourn. As the Advocacy Alert goes to print, the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force has identified four bills that need our strong support:

LC 79 - Promote Farm-To-School programs in Oregon by creating a position within the Department of Education to complement the one in the Department of Agriculture. Farm-to-school improves childhood nutrition by helping to prevent obesity through increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, and by supporting Oregon farmers, food processors and manufacturers by creating new market opportunities.

SB 1073 - Preserve existing subsidized affordable housing and support strategies to end homelessness. Support the Housing Alliance request for \$2.75 million to preserve existing affordable housing in danger of being lost due to expiring subsidy contracts and provide funds for counties to develop and/or implement their 10-year plans to end homelessness.

SB 1090 - Establish fair and affordable standards for home mortgage loans to lower income families. Support legislation to address problems in the subprime market that will set realistic parameters so that lower income families can afford to keep their homes.

LC 62 - Simplify and publicize health insurance programs for children. Approximately 60,000 Oregon children lack health insurance but may be eligible for coverage under state-run medical programs. A coordinated outreach effort is needed to reach these families so their children can get access to health services.

Those with Legislative Council (LC) numbers will be assigned bill numbers shortly. Please see the Take Five on how you can help make these bills a reality.

For more information please contact Patti Whitney-Wise (503) 595-5501, patti@oregonhunger.org.

Tax credits support family economic stability

Last year more than 211,000 Oregon families received reimbursements from the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), amounting to more than \$363 million. Unfortunately, more than 75,000 families, seniors and other individuals failed to receive millions of dollars in tax credits they were eligible for,

simply because they did not file a tax return. People may qualify for credits even if they owe no taxes, because credits are refundable.

For tax year 2007, households with two or more qualifying children may get back up to \$4,716 from the EITC. Other available credits include

the federal Child Tax Credit, the Oregon Earned Income Credit, and the Oregon Working Family Child Care Credit. In most cases, tax credit payments will not affect eligibility for Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), food stamps, low-income housing or most Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) payments. *(continued on page 2)*

EITC *(continued from page 1)*

Help us get the word out: CASH Oregon would like to help you help your community find out about valuable federal and state tax credits. Together we can put more money back into the hands of income-eligible individuals and families, helping to provide more economic stability.

Over 200 IRS-sponsored AARP tax-aid sites in Oregon provide free tax preparation to low-to-moderate income individuals, families and seniors. They make sure families receive all tax credits for which they are eligible. Sites will be open from February 1st through April 15th. To find free tax preparation sites near you call 503-243-7765 (CASH Oregon), 1-888-227-7669 (AARP) or 211, or visit www.cashoregon.org or www.aarp.org/taxaide.

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

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Tired of not having health coverage?

Do you or someone you know need free or low-cost health coverage?

From January 28 through February 29, 2008, the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) will take names for a reservation list of adults who are 19 years old and older and need health care coverage.

The Oregon Health Plan (OHP) is a medical assistance program for low-income Oregonians. OHP offers two primary benefit packages - OHP Plus and OHP Standard.

The OHP Standard benefit package provides

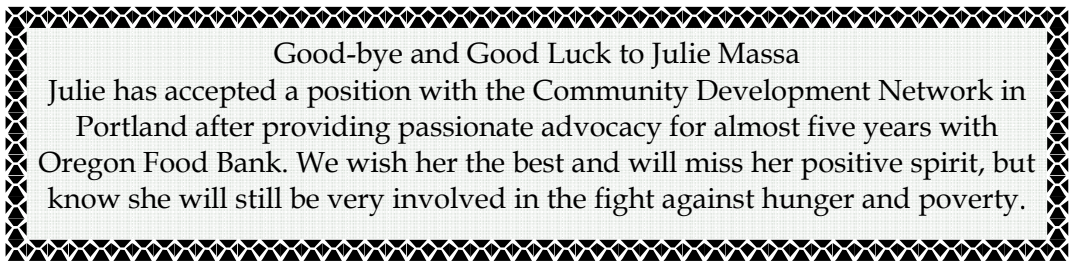
medical assistance for low-income non-pregnant adults who are 19 years old or older. Lack of funding has kept OHP Standard closed to new enrollment for the past three years.

DHS is getting ready to open the OHP Standard program to a limited number of people. Unfortunately, there is not enough money to cover everyone who may qualify. So, to be fair to everyone, DHS has created an OHP Standard reservation list. After the list closes on February 29, DHS will randomly draw a limited number of names from the list and mail OHP Standard appli-

cations to those people whose names have been drawn.

There are three ways to get on the reservation list:

- Fill out a request online - go to Web site: www.oregon.gov/DHS/ open and enter your information.
- Mail a request - forms are available at DHS or Area Agency on Aging (AAA) offices, county health departments and most major hospitals and clinics.
- Sign up by phone - call 800-699-9075 or 503-378-7800, Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.



Training for new summer food program sponsors

Don't let the weather fool you, summer really is just a few months away. However, along with summer comes an end to school lunches and an increase in childhood hunger. If you're wondering how you or your organization can aid in the fight against childhood hunger, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is a great opportunity.

SFSP is a federal program that provides reimbursement for meals served to children 18 years and un-

der in qualifying neighborhoods. To participate, 50 percent or more of the children residing in the area must qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. However, eligible sites can serve meals to any child who wants to participate, regardless of their family's income. Some sites provide just the meal, while others are paired with summer activities. Schools, local governments, churches, food banks and other non-profit organizations all make great SFSP sponsors.

New sponsors must attend one of the training sessions in February or March. If you're interested in the program but not yet ready to participate, please note that the training does not obligate you in any way. Trainings will be held toward the end of February but **the last day to register is Feb. 8th**. To register, contact Genna James by Feb. 8th at 503-947-5902 or genna.james@state.or.us.

