



take five

(actions that take five minutes or less)

Action: Please call your U.S. representative at the Capitol switchboard, 1-202-225-3121. Tell your member of Congress to support a farm bill that maintains expanded categorical eligibility. If you don't know who your U.S. rep. is, go to <http://tinyurl.com/2t6k9w>.

Message: Expanded categorical eligibility has been a key federal provision for the decrease in hunger rates in Oregon. It allows Oregon and more than 40 other states to coordinate eligibility for the Food Stamp Program with rules used for other state initiatives. A potential farm bill amendment in the House agriculture committee could eliminate this provision, cutting off 50,000 hungry Oregonians from the Food Stamp Program. Nearly 150,000 more face the risk of losing their benefits, depending on their resources.

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

Farm bill growing in the U.S. Congress

As we reported in last month's Advocacy Alert, the reauthorization of the federal farm bill—one of the most important pieces of food and agriculture legislation—is proceeding in the U.S. Congress.

On June 14, the House Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry met to write—or in legislative terminology, “mark up”—the nutrition title of the farm bill—the portion that includes the Food Stamp Program and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). Anti-hunger advocates are pleased with

the results. The draft nutrition title represents a positive step in the effort to improve these two programs that are critical in the fight against hunger. The bill addresses a number of key food stamp concerns by improving benefit levels, reducing the disincentive to save, and helping families with child care expenses. It would also increase support for TEFAP.

The draft bill would raise the standard deduction for determining food stamp benefit levels from \$134 to \$156 and index it for inflation. This would end the erosion in the purchasing

power of food stamps, and would make up some of the ground lost since 1996. This provision would help about 221,000 Oregon households in an average month.

Another provision would allow households to deduct the full amount of dependent care costs they incur in order to work, which in turn would qualify them for larger food stamp benefits. About 7,000 Oregon households each month would benefit from this new standard. Raising the standard deduction and allowing the deduction of all dependent

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Food ‘n fun this summer

The Summer Lunch Program is in when school is out

Bite into a yummy sandwich and then dip your crunchy broccoli into some ranch dressing. Peel some fresh fruit and then wash it all down with a swig of cold milk. Sound like a good lunch? This summer, children can eat free lunches through the Summer Food Service Program, a federally funded nutrition program open to any child or youth aged 1-18 years. It started in June and will run through mid-August. In addition to lunch, many sites offer breakfast and snacks as well.

The Summer Food Program makes sure all children have access to adequate, healthy food during the summer months when they can't eat at school. The sites are located in neighborhoods where a majority of students rely on free or reduced price meals during the school year. In order to make the program welcoming and accessible, meals are served in locations where kids congregate during the summer, such as playgrounds, summer schools and community centers.

This program is meeting a real need in our community
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HELP US SAVE OUR RESOURCES

If you are currently receiving the monthly *Advocacy Alert* by mail and have access to email, please consider sending me your email address. I will add you to our Capwiz site and you will start receiving the *Advocacy Alert* electronically. Your change will help OFB save on postage, printing and paper. Plus you will still receive this newsletter! Contact: lvadez@oregonfoodbank.org or call: 503-282-0555 Ext. 246

Thank you,
Lori Valdez

Support a farm bill that benefits Oregonians

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care costs would bring approximately \$12.1 million of federal food stamp funds into the Oregon economy.

Other provisions would exclude combat-related military pay from countable income and exclude education and retirement accounts from countable financial resources. This would allow individuals and families to access food stamp benefits without having to first spend important savings and threatening their future economic security.

TEFAP would see a signifi-

cant funding increase under the subcommittee's mark up. Currently, \$140 million a year is mandated for commodity purchases. This rate would increase to \$250 million, with Oregon receiving approximately \$1.5 million more in TEFAP commodities—food that is the foundation of the food supply distributed by the Oregon Food Bank Network throughout the state.

However, these positive steps take effect only if budgetary offsets are added to the bill to pay for

the cost of the food stamp and TEFAP improvements, which would total \$5.4 billion over five years. The key challenge now for the House agriculture committee and the House as a whole will be to turn promises on paper into a reality by providing the offsets for these critical improvements.

The full House agriculture committee mark up is scheduled after the July 4 Congressional recess. We are concerned that an amendment may be proposed in the full commit-

tee that would eliminate expanded categorical eligibility which has allowed Oregon to coordinate eligibility for the Food Stamp Program with rules used for other state initiatives. If eliminated, 50,000 Oregonians would be cut from the Food Stamp Program. For more information go to www.oregonhunger.org.

Please see our Take Five column to find ways you can continue to support a farm bill that benefits Oregonians who struggle against hunger and food insecurity.

Last month, we discussed our support for the McGovern-Emerson bill, H.R. 2129, provisions of which would significantly improve nutrition programs in the farm bill. We would like to thank Oregon Representatives Blumenauer, DeFazio, Hooley, and Wu for signing on as co-sponsors of H.R. 2129—bringing the current number of co-sponsors to 107. This sends a strong signal to the House agriculture committee about the importance of new investment in food stamps and TEFAP.

In the Senate, a full committee mark up will likely occur in July or later. The Senate would like to have a floor vote in August. Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) has circulated a letter expressing strong support for new investments in the Food Stamp Program. Oregon Senator Ron Wyden has signed the letter while Senator Gordon Smith has not.



Summer food 'n fun program

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

OFB Advocacy Staff:
 (503) 282-0555 [Portland area]
 1-800-777-7427 [outside Portland]
 Jon Stubenvoll X206
 Julie Massa X267
 Jeff Kleen X204
 Tammy Darby X230
<http://www.oregonfoodbank.org/advocacy@oregonfoodbank.org>

OHRTF Staff:
 Patti Whitney-Wise
 (503) 595-5501
patti@oregonhunger.org
 Nancy Weed, (503) 998-6194
nancy@oregonhunger.org
 Jessica Chanay, (503) 595-5502
jessica@oregonhunger.org
 Brandi Tuck, (503) 595-5503
brandi@oregonhunger.org

ties. Approximately one in five children in Oregon are food insecure, meaning they have limited or uncertain access to safe and nutritious food. Children who are hungry or food insecure are more likely to be in poor health and less likely to form friendships, to be curious, and to learn. In response, nearly 1.4 million meals were served last summer in neighborhoods across the state.

Some of our best childhood memories happen during the summer break. Let's make sure every child can relax, have fun, and not

worry about having enough to eat. To find a meal site near you, call 1-800-SAFENET (toll free) or go to www.SummerFoodOregon.org. This online resource shows maps of summer lunch sites across the state and hours they are open. It also provides information on public transportation and gives local contact info if you have a question or want to get involved.

Would you like to help? There are a number of things you can do to help: prepare or serve meals, assist with outreach efforts

or special events, lead recreational activities. Think about things you are good at and how they might be helpful to a site near you! You can help provide a safe, positive experience for kids while building community and addressing hunger and poverty. Go to www.SummerFoodOregon.org or call Annie Kirchner at the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force at 503-517-2099 for more information.

