



www.oregonfoodbank.org

# ADVOCACY ALERT



Oregon Food Bank  
Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force

MARCH 2008

VOLUME 14 ISSUE 3

## Wrap-up on Oregon's supplemental session

Oregon's February supplemental legislative session roared to a start and finished a week ahead of schedule, mainly because many of the legislative committees met in January to give extra time for a thorough hearing on major bills.

However, a downturn in the state's revenue forecast on February 8 dampened the opportunity for some of the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force, Oregon Food Bank, and other advocates' priorities. Nonetheless, several important pieces of legislation were passed, while other issues were left on the table.

### HB 3601 - Farm to School

Last year the Legislature created a farm-to-school position in the Oregon Department of Agriculture. This year's House Bill 3601 proposed a companion position in the Oregon

Department of Education (ODE) to fully coordinate farm-to-school activities.

The Ways and Means Committee passed the bill but without funding the position, instead directing the ODE to find \$95,000 within its existing budget. HB 3601 then passed the House of Representatives and Senate unanimously. We were disappointed over the lack of funding but will support ODE in implementing this program starting July of 2008. The good news is that it will now be in ODE's base budget request for 2009 going forward.

### SB 1073 - Housing Preservation/Homelessness

Anti-hunger advocates supported our affordable housing ally's efforts through Senate Bill 1073. This bill contained two proposals: a \$2 million allocation into a trust fund to preserve affordable

housing units and \$750,000 to support Oregon counties as they prepare and implement plans to address homelessness.

Although SB 1073 did not pass, the Ways and Means Committee did allocate \$1 million to the housing trust fund, with the provision that the Oregon Housing and Community Services Department contribute an additional \$1 million from its existing budget. This agreement allowed the full \$2 million to be put into the housing trust fund. No money was allocated for the ending homelessness plans.

Another important housing measure will increase the cap on the Oregon Affordable Housing Lenders Credit program from \$13 million to



(continued on page 2)

### take five

(actions that take five minutes or less)

Settling on a number for new spending in the farm bill is the key next step in moving a House-Senate conference agreement. An agreement on the amount of new money for the farm bill is being finalized as Advocacy Alert goes to press.

It is critical that negotiators settle on an overall number that is sufficient to accommodate \$11.5 billion in new investments in the nutrition title, the level set in the House-passed farm bill. At stake are improvements in the Food Stamp Program and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).

### Action:

Call your representative and both Senators Wyden and Smith to urge passage of a final farm bill conference agreement with the strongest possible nutrition title. Call toll-free 1-800-826-9624, made available by AARP, to connect to the U.S. Capitol switchboard. You will be connected after hearing a short message.

### Message:

Ask your senators and representative to:

- Support the House-passed farm bill nutrition title level of \$11.5 billion for new investments over ten years.
- The full \$11.5 billion is needed to improve food stamp benefits and access and to increase TEFAP funding.

## President issues his FY 2009 budget

On February 4, President George W. Bush issued his budget for fiscal year 2009, which covers federal expenditures from October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009. Unfortunately for the 35.5 million Americans struggling against hunger, the president's

budget reduces or eliminates many programs that help the poorest among us and misses opportunities to shore up the safety net they need.

For food stamps, the president's budget is inadequate. While it does make

nominal increases, the budget does not enhance benefits and simply meets increased demand. Also, for his fourth budget in a row, the president proposes eliminating food stamp coverage for more than 300,000 people in low-income

(continued on page 2)

## Session wrap - up (cont. from page 1)

\$17 million. This passed as part of HB 3619.

### SB 1090 - Fair Standards for Home Loans

Senate Bill 1090 proposed a series of reforms in sub-prime mortgage lending and was supported by a broad coalition of anti-hunger advocates, consumer and senior groups, and faith-based organizations. The bill drew a great deal of opposition from the banking and finance industry, which was able to keep the legislation bottled up in committee.

However, two of the proposed reforms were amended into a bill by the House of Representatives. The House measure included caps on repayment penalties and requirements for disclosure of loan terms. The House passed the bill to the Senate but it never received a hearing and so died in Senate committee.

Some smaller reforms were passed to increase oversight and to provide borrowers with clearer information on

their loans in SB 1064 and HB 3630. Advocates will be working on a major reform package for 2009.

### HB 3614 - Health Insurance for Children

This legislation proposed to increase the minimum length of time a child would be insured through a state health plan, from the current six months up to 12 months. Also, the proposal included additional outreach and simplification of the process.

Unfortunately the legislation did not pass, which was a disappointing loss for Oregon children. Because of the economic downturn, the Legislature was wary of passing anything that would lead to increased costs during the next biennium. The Ways and Means Committee included \$500,000 for pilot primary care homes but took the other provisions off the table.

The Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force provided strong testimony that this action was "penny wise and pound

foolish" because it does not address health care as a prevention strategy and leaves many Oregon children at risk. It also seemed unfair to give businesses another \$100 million by not disconnecting from the federal stimulus package while worrying about the \$20 million roll-up cost for extending children's health enrollment.

One concession the Ways and Means Committee added was by way of a budget note that directs the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) to report back to the Legislature's Emergency Board on the current status of enrollment policies and the costs associated with extending enrollment from six to 12 months. Advocates are also exploring opportunities to convince the Emergency Board to implement the eligibility extension in June, or September when the report is due.

In other news, the governor's initiative to improve hunger, health and nutri-

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

Jeff Kleen X204

Tammy Darby X230

<http://www.oregonfoodbank.org>

[advocacy@oregonfoodbank.org](mailto:advocacy@oregonfoodbank.org)

#### OHRTF Staff:

Patti Whitney-Wise

[patti@oregonhunger.org](mailto:patti@oregonhunger.org)

Nancy Weed

[nancy@oregonhunger.org](mailto:nancy@oregonhunger.org)

Jessica Chanay

[jessica@oregonhunger.org](mailto:jessica@oregonhunger.org)

Annie Kirschner

[annie@oregonhunger.org](mailto:annie@oregonhunger.org)

Rick Freed

[rick@oregonhunger.org](mailto:rick@oregonhunger.org)

<http://www.oregonhunger.org>

tion through the use of food stamp bonus dollars was approved as part of the DHS budget rebalance plan. This will infuse \$3.2 million into food stamp outreach and nutrition education. In addition, DHS was allowed to keep most of the savings identified in its budget to reinvest in caseworkers for child welfare and additional staffing at the State Hospital.

Overall, the supplemental session showed the benefits of going to annual sessions. A rosier revenue picture would have made it better, of course.

## FY 2009 budget (cont. from page 1)

working families with children by eliminating food stamp categorical eligibility. Based on the most recent data, this would lead to almost 40,000 Oregonians each month immediately losing their benefits, including almost 12,000 children. By doing so, the state's economy would lose more than \$9.3 million in federal funds each year.

The weak economy, coupled with record increases in the cost of food, has generated a heightened need for

the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). The WIC funding provided in the president's budget would not be enough to meet the expected need. It also depends in part, for the money it does provide, on savings from a proposed cut to nutrition education funds and other WIC services.

The U.S. Congress is now holding hearings on the president's budget in order to create its own budget reso-

lution by April 15. It is our hope that Congress will take positive steps to strengthen the vital nutrition programs so many hungry Americans rely on to put food on their tables.

