



take five

Action:

Call U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith at the Capitol switchboard, (202) 225-3121. Tell them that it is important to pass a farm bill that makes significant new investments in the programs that fight hunger in Oregon—TEFAP and food stamps.

Message:

Protect the \$250 million investment in TEFAP included in the House-passed 2007 farm bill (H.R. 2419). Also, build on the House bill's \$4 billion in new investments in food stamps by further strengthening benefit increases (especially for the minimum monthly benefit and standard deductions), raising resource limits, and restoring food stamp eligibility to more vulnerable groups. Significant investments must be made in these programs to ensure that they reach the people that need them most.

Farm bill passes the House...now on to the Senate

On July 27, by a vote of 231 to 191, the U.S. House of Representatives approved the Farm, Nutrition and Bioenergy Act of 2007 (H.R. 2419, or the "farm bill"). The nutrition title of the bill invests an additional \$4 billion over five years to improve Food Stamp Program benefits and access and raises funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) from \$140 million to \$250 million annually with adjustments for increases in food prices.

The bill raises the food stamp standard deduction (for determining eligibility) for households with one to three members, from \$134

to \$145 and indexes it to inflation. This will increase monthly benefits for these households by \$5. The minimum monthly benefit will increase from \$10 to \$16. Dependent care deductions will no longer be capped and tax-preferred retirement and education accounts will not be counted as assets.

Oregon Food Bank is very pleased with the House bill because of its significant increase in TEFAP funding—a cornerstone of the emergency food distribution system in Oregon—and the

new investments in food stamps.

There was lively debate of the bill on the House floor, with supporters and detractors sparring over the source of the \$4 billion for nutrition title improvements. Congressional Quarterly reported that,

"The partisan split erupted over a proposal by Ways and Means Committee member Lloyd Doggett (D-TX) to raise [the money] by ending a practice known as 'earnings stripping,' which lets foreign-



(continued on page 2)

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

School meals help in more than one way

Now that the new school year is starting, it's time for parents to submit the Confidential Family Application for Free and Reduced-Price Meals at their local schools.

Families are encouraged to return their applications regardless of their apparent need. Many are surprised to discover they qualify for meal assistance. Just because a family qualifies, however, does not mean they have to participate. We encourage advocates to help families fill out and return their meal assistance applications and work with

local schools to get more families enrolled. Back-to-school nights are a great opportunity to follow-up with families to make sure they received an application and had an opportunity to fill it out. Reminders in school, neighborhood or other newsletters are also helpful.

There is a push for applications to be returned before the end of October; however it's important to note that families can still apply for and receive meal assistance throughout the school year.

The Summer Food Service Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program use data from school lunch applications to qualify day care providers and After School Meals and Snacks Programs located in low-income areas. This ensures that children living in low-income homes get the nutrition they need to grow and develop, and take full advantage of their education.

These programs can only provide services within a geographic area where at least 50% of the student population at a nearby

(continued on page 2)

Farm bill moves on (continued from page 1)

owned companies shift income to a country with lower tax rates.”

The House also debated, and ultimately defeated, an amendment proposed by Reps. Ron Kind (D-WI) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ) and supported by Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), that would have drastically overhauled the bill—particularly Title I, which includes commodity payments to farmers—and increased food stamp funding to \$5.6 billion.

Though the amendment was not made part of the final bill, Rep. Blumenauer deserves great credit for being a strong supporter of the farm bill reform movement which played a large role in nutrition title improvements.

Now the bill moves on to the Senate and action by the Senate agriculture committee, chaired by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA). The committee has been circulating discussion drafts during the August Congressional recess. Sen. Harkin hopes to have a farm bill through the committee by the third week of September and onto the Senate floor by the end of September.

A House/Senate conference committee would negotiate any differences between H.R. 2419 and a Senate-passed bill. Congress must reauthorize or extend the farm bill before the current bill expires on September 30, 2007.

See this month’s ‘take five’ to take action.

School meals help (continued from page 1)

school qualifies for free or reduced-price lunches. It’s important that this data accurately reflect the need of the student body so the best possible support is provided. For some programs, such as the After School Meals and Snacks Program and Title I funding, data received after October cannot be used.

Parents often do not realize the following:

- ✓ Families can help their schools by returning their applications, even if they choose not to participate.

- ✓ Free and reduced price applications impact the school’s ability to qualify for additional funding for things like better technology, English as a second language and other academic support programs, as well as determining the entire neighborhood’s eligibility for out-of-school-time nutrition programs.

- ✓ Studies have shown that many students who participate in the National School Lunch Program eat more vegetables and drink more milk than students who do not participate. They also consume fewer sweetened drinks and snack foods.

- ✓ Because federal funds are available for free and reduced-price meals, school districts do not lose money by providing this assistance.

For more information contact Heidi Dupuis at Oregon Department of Education, 503-947-5893. You can obtain a sample letter to send to your school or group newsletter, highlighting the importance of these applications, by contacting Annie Kirschner at the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force, 503-517-2099, annie@oregonhunger.org.



After school meals and snacks boost nutrition

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

After school programs are starting soon but many children won’t get the full benefit of the program because they are hungry and may lack concentration and energy or have discipline issues. Does your after school program provide educational or enrichment activities in a safe, structured environment? If so, the After School Meals and Snacks Program (ASMSP) could provide a nutritionally balanced boost to your school age children and youth to help them engage and participate in after school activities. ASMSP provides reimbursement

for meals and snacks to qualified non-profits, public entities, some for-profit entities, and tribal-agencies that are located in areas where 50% or more of the student body qualifies for free or reduced meals. To find out if your program qualifies please contact Darcy Miller at darcy.miller@state.or.us or 503-947-5899.

Have you wanted to provide a meal at your after school program but lacked funding? Qualified programs can get funding to fully cover meals and/or snacks, depending on the

length of your program. Last year, the ASMSP provided more than 1.2 million meals and snacks to after school programs in Oregon with more than \$2.4 million reimbursed to program sponsors.

ASMSP is an excellent resource that can help your program be more effective and successful. ASMSP is good for children, good for after school programs and good for the community. For more information about ASMSP please contact Rick Freed at rick@oregonhunger.org or 503-984-7597.