



ADVOCACY ALERT



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Oregon Food Bank
Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force

Oregon's poverty ratings improve

New data released in August by the U.S. Census Bureau show a slight decrease in the percentage of Oregonians living in poverty in 2007. In our state poverty was 12.9% in 2007 compared to 13.2% in 2000. At the same time, median household income has continued to rise over the years reaching \$48,730 in 2007.

While these new statistics show a positive trend for many Oregonians, the numbers also show that one age group is still disproportionately disadvantaged: children. In 2007, 16.3% of Oregon's children were living in poverty.

Also, the percentage of Oregonians without health insurance rose to 17.3% during 2006 and 2007, up

from the 2004 and 2005 two-year average of 15.9%.

The new poverty data, which were collected in 2007, do not reflect the current recession and its impact on families who are struggling every day to put enough food on the table, pay for rising energy costs, and pay for housing and health care.

There are things we can do to continue making Oregon a safe and fair place to live. The legislative agenda in this newsletter provides opportunities for Oregonians to weigh in on important public policies in 2009. Also, Oregonians will have a chance to vote on a number of ballot measures this fall that will have a huge impact on Oregon's general fund,

directly impacting the state budget and its ability to fund programs that matter for low-income households. One of the measures would directly impact Oregon Food Bank and many local agencies' budgets.

A few of the heavy-hitting ballot measures impacting Oregon's general fund include:

Measure 59, which would create an unlimited deduction from federal income taxes on individual taxpayers' Oregon income-tax returns. Currently state taxpayers may deduct up to \$5,500 in federal taxes. Making this deduction unlimited would reduce the state general fund by \$1.3 billion in 2009-2011 and \$2.4 billion in 2011-2013, directly threatening the

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take five

(actions that take five minutes or less)

Message:

As of August over 5 million people had yet to receive their economic stimulus checks, a one-time rebate designed to simulate the economy. Many unclaimed checks would go to the elderly whose main source of income is Social Security or veterans receiving disability payments. Economic stimulus checks could make a big difference to their budgets: a single person can get \$300 or \$600 for a couple. These funds also provide a boost to our economy.

Action:

Take five minutes to tell your relatives, friends or neighbors about this opportunity and encourage them to file a return if they have not done so. **To claim this payment they must file tax form 1040A by October 15th.**

For more information about claiming this rebate go to the IRS website: <http://www.irs.gov>.

Preparations for the 2009 legislative session

The Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force invites you to join us in advocating for policies during the 2009 legislative session that will help Oregonians feed their families:

Expand the refundable Earned Income Tax Credit:

We need to increase the value of the Oregon credit to 18% so below-poverty workers can keep more of their income

for food and other necessities.

Restore a short-term assistance program for individuals with disabilities:

We can support Oregonians with disabilities while they pursue Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Income (SSDI).

Support affordable healthcare access for all Oregonians:

The Healthy Kids Plan, OHP Standard, and other reforms will help Oregonians get the health care they need.

Increase funding for affordable housing: Dedicated funds will help address critical housing needs and homelessness in Oregon's communities.

Establish a paid family leave insurance program:

This will help lower income workers take time off to have a child or care for a sick child or other family member.

Expand unemployment insurance: We need to strengthen the unemployment system so it covers more temporary and part-time workers.

Expand WIC and Senior Farm Direct programs: We can increase the benefits (cont. on second page)

Ratings improve slightly

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state's ability to pay for vital services that support low-income Oregonians. The average tax cut for the top one percent would equal \$15,809. The average tax cut for the lowest 20 percent would be \$0. Oregon Food Bank opposes Measure 59.

Measure 58, which prohibits teaching public school students in language other than English for more than two years. If this measure is passed, additional school spending would need to increase by roughly \$203-\$253 million per year, according to the state Legislative Revenue Office, in order maintain federal regulations that require students'

adequate language learning progress.

Measure 61 creates mandatory minimum prison sentence for certain theft, identify theft, forgery, drug and burglary crimes. This measure has projected costs of \$256-400 million per biennium, not including the construction of new prisons, and does not fund, require or address addiction or drug treatment.

Measure 64 prohibits public employees from utilizing payroll deductions for defined political activities and prohibits using public resources for political purposes. Due to flawed and loose definitions, an unintended consequence would

prohibit Oregon Food Bank and local agencies from conducting food drives on public property, including libraries and schools. These drives have historically moved more than 750,000 pounds of food through local distribution programs. Oregon Food Bank opposes Measure 64.

The cost of these measures, if passed, would come from the state's general fund and would threaten funding for other human services. Measure 64 would directly impact local agencies and threaten their ability to provide emergency food to hungry families.

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

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'09 session

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and serve more women, infants, children, and seniors, while supporting local farmers.

Make school breakfast free for more low-income children: Children whose families earning 185% of the federal poverty level often miss out on school breakfast. We can help them get the nutrition they need to succeed in school.

Provide 15 cents per lunch for Oregon fruits and vegetables: This will help schools feed students more fruits and vegetables while also supporting Oregon farmers.

For more information, go to www.oregonhunger.org or contact Patti Whitney-Wise at (503) 595-5501 or patti@oregonhunger.org.

October conference creates opportunities to thrive

Housing markets are in turmoil, energy prices are gobbling the American dollar, and the overall economy sags. Need solutions?

Come to a place where concerned women and men will join in "Creating Opportunities to Thrive" on October 6, 7 and 8, at the Salem Conference Center.

You are invited to get out of your workplace for a few days, come to Salem, and get a fresh look at challenges that face Oregonians. When the conference is over, you will come away with answers...and the energy to get things done.

If you can't attend the entire conference, consider joining us for Day 2 (Oct. 7th):

Nancy Amidei, Director of Civic Engagement Project at the University of Washington and a nationally recognized expert on involving nonprofits in advocacy, will begin the day by setting the framework for moving forward both as individuals and as organizations.

Following the morning plenary, four workshops will focus on food and nutrition, housing, family stability and asset development. Each workshop includes a background session on regional and Oregon-specific information, including root causes, short-term and long-term solutions, and best practices. Participants will share their per-

spectives and identify next steps.

This year's conference will have a new look and feel, showcasing national and state experts on a variety of affordable housing and community service issues.

Register online at <http://o.hcs.state.or.us/conference/register.jsp> or call Sandy McDonnell at 503-986-2012 for more info.

