



Advocacy Alert

OREGON FOOD BANK
OREGON HUNGER RELIEF TASK FORCE

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take five

(actions that take five minutes or less)

Action:

Call or email the President urge him to support \$1 billion in new money for child nutrition programs.

Message:

- ✓ Improve nutrition programs that help our children learn.
- ✓ Include \$1 billion in new federal money to improve and expand child nutrition programs.

Call:

The White House Comment Line:
202-456-1111

Legislative Yellow Pages

State Legislative Information
1-800-332-2313 (outside Salem)
(503) 986-1000 (in Salem)
www.leg.state.or.us/citizenguide

Federal Legislative Contacts
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
Senator Smith
(503) 326-3386
Senator Wyden
(503) 326-7525

One billion ways to leave no child behind

Congress voted to delay action on reauthorizing child nutrition programs – school lunch and breakfast, summer lunch, and after school snacks. As a result, we have another opportunity to push for new money to be added to these programs. The President is expected to finish work on the FY 2005 budget proposal by the end of this year, so calls are needed now. The message is simple, improve the nutrition



programs that help our children learn. An investment of \$1 billion in new federal money will support critical improvements to the accessibility and quality of the Child Nutrition Programs.

Improving educational outcomes and narrowing

the achievement gap are two central goals of the Leave No Child Behind Act. Numerous research studies have shown the importance of proper nutrition in improving student test scores and classroom behavior. The Bush Administration has a golden opportunity to help students, teachers, and schools realize those educational gains by making sure all children are well fed and ready to learn.

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The increasing need for nonprofit organizations to engage in collaborative advocacy

‘Emergency fatigue’ is a term increasingly heard within the social services community. The phrase is used to describe the mindset of social service staff who are growing weary from years of working under the pressure of increasing need and decreasing resources. The story of dwindling food reserves, client loads twice the level of the previous year, a waiting room full of families in search of emergency housing or medical attention is one being played out in communities across the country. As this story unfolds, organizations are scrambling to make up for shrinking donations from individuals, foundations, the business community, and government. It all adds up to an exhausting mix of fewer resources

available to stretch across the growing chasm of public need versus public benefits.

Backed into a corner by urgent need, social service agencies struggle to find the resources to devote to advocacy. However, the challenge we face requires nonprofits to reconsider the role of advocacy in their organization. Given the staggering growth in need due to increasing poverty, decreasing jobs, and dwindling federal assistance, nonprofit agencies will not be able to keep up.

In the October 16, 2003 issue of *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, Mark Rosenman argues that the time has come for social service agencies to take a fresh approach to advocacy cam-

paigns. “What is at stake today are basic questions about the role of government, about our commitment as a society to generate and use government resources to solve public problems, about the need for our elected leaders to reverse policies that erode social, economic, and political justice.”

The crucial next, according to Rosenman, outlines in his article starts with looking beyond the immediate agenda and pushing for broad changes in the policies that are impacting low-and moderate-income Americans. Staff, clients, volunteers, board members and supporters must begin to look at the relationship between the cause they care about and the broader

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Increasing need to engage in collaborative advocacy

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public benefit. Working for policies that increase the economic well being of all low-and moderate-income people may have more impact than working to increase funding for those same families on a program by program basis.

Working toward social justice requires a constant re-evaluation of the tactics and tools we employ to reach our goal. Rosenman makes the case for grass roots advocacy aimed at increasing the political skills and activism of individuals while working to build enduring networks of organizations rather than single-issue coalitions.

The challenge that is set before nonprofit agencies serving the most vulnerable in our society is to take their place at the front of the fight for social justice.

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

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OSU study finds that working does not guarantee food security for Oregon families

Oregon State University researchers Mark Edwards and Bruce Weber spent the past six months delving into the USDA Current Population Survey (CPS) hunger and food insecurity data (the same data that places Oregon near the top of states in hunger) to determine what populations were most impacted by hunger and food insecurity in Oregon. Their in-depth data analysis confirms that Oregon families experience more hunger and food insecurity than families in other states.

Specifically, Edwards and Weber found that three populations stand out as having significantly higher hunger rates compared to the same populations in other states:

- Households with *no* unemployed adults (double-income households)
- Households with at least one full-time worker
- Two-adult families with children

According to the study's results, working Oregonians

in two-income households have a hunger rate almost *four times higher* than those in the rest of the nation (3.9 percent in Oregon as compared to 1 percent nationally). Two-parent households with children have hunger rates *more than three times higher* than the national average (with 7.3 percent in Oregon as compared to 2 percent nationally).

Other populations where Oregon's hunger rate is significantly higher than in other states:

- Households with a man working in a blue-collar occupation
- Households with a woman working in a blue-collar occupation or administrative support/sales occupation
- Households that moved to another house within the same county during the past year

The mobility issue is one researchers want to examine more closely. According to the study, one out of three

people in Oregon who moved within the same county is food insecure. Only one other state had a higher hunger rate among local movers—Connecticut (the only state that had a faster rate of growth in income inequality than Oregon during the 1990s).

Edwards and Weber are working on a companion report that will use Oregon Population Survey data to explore why these populations are struggling with hunger and food insecurity in Oregon. The researchers specifically will explore costs (such as housing, medical, child care) relative to income and whether lack of social supports contributes to higher hunger and food insecurity rates in Oregon. The companion report should be available by spring of 2004.

The full study can be found at: <http://arec.oregonstate.edu/ruralstudies/publications.htm>

One billion ways to leave no child behind (continued from page 1)

Last year no new funds were made available for child nutrition. Instead, the Bush Administration proposed requiring 12% (instead of the current 3%) of children applying for free and reduced-price school meals to provide school officials with income verification - a burden to families and schools alike. Researchers estimate that each percentage point increase in verification would result in 30,000 eligible children ending their participation. The Bush Administration called for the

“savings” gleaned from the reductions in school meal enrollment to be the only funding available for program improvement and expansion.

Advocates have been working to minimize any new verification requirements while supporting family friendly ways to improve program oversight through proposals such as direct certification. Direct certification automatically enrolls children in the school lunch program based on their

eligibility and participation in other federal food programs such as food stamps.

It is well within the capacity of our country to make a modest investment in childhood nutrition. What we need to do is demonstrate our support through advocacy. For more information visit www.frac.org or www.wrahc.org. Please see this month's “take five.”