



Advocacy Alert

OREGON FOOD BANK
OREGON HUNGER RELIEF TASK FORCE

July/August 2002
Volume 8 Issue 9



take five

(actions that take five minutes or less)

Action: Call Senator Smith and Senator Wyden and ask them to co-sponsor S.2660, a bill to increase the number of children participating in the Summer Food Program.

Message:

- All states, including Oregon, need a simpler Summer Food Program so they can feed more hungry kids.
- Right now, only about one in five children who eat free or reduced-price meals during the school year are getting summer meals.
- Senator Lugar's bill (S.2660) merely expands a successful pilot project. It will help states feed more children!

See story this page for more information.

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

Oregon serving more summer meals to hungry children, but many still go unfed

Summer can be a difficult time for families struggling to put food on the table. For most of the year, their children can depend on free or reduced-price lunches at school. Unfortunately, the summer months mean an end to school meals, leaving these families with few opportunities for these same children to get nutritious meals.

Oregon has a few tools available to combat summertime childhood hunger. One such tool is the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Most of the sites are located at schools, parks, recreation centers, and other non-profit and government sites in the community.

Oregon's SFSP currently serves less than 25% of the low-income children who are served by the School Breakfast and Lunch Program during the school year. More than 152,000 children eat free and reduced-price meals during the school year, while less than 36,000 are reached with free summer meals.

Although Oregon has increased the number of low-income children receiving summer meals over the last three years, there is clearly still a lot of work to be done.

Oregon making progress

Across the country, the program is greatly underutilized. Nationally, the average participation rate is about one in five eligible children. Reasons for this low participation range from a lack of sponsors to inadequate outreach to program cost and complexity.

The Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force and the Oregon Department of Education have been working to increase the number of summer meal sponsors and sites throughout the state. They have also focused on outreach to children, designing new outreach materials and providing a toll-free 800 number to get site information to interested parents.

From 2000 to 2001, Oregon increased its number of meal sites by 13 percent and increased the number of children participating by 12 percent. Even greater participation is expected this summer, with summer food sites operating in all but seven counties.

Reducing barriers to feeding more children

Like the school breakfast and lunch programs, SFSP is a federal nutrition program. SFSP is governed by complex rules and regulations, and many programs find that the reimbursement rate for meals is not enough to allow their sites to break even financially.

The federal government has sought to encourage summer food participation by giving states the option for schools in high need areas to operate summer programs through their existing school meal programs and receive the free meal reimbursement rate for all children served. This summer there are forty-three Oregon school districts taking advantage of this "seamless" waiver.

In the fall of 2000, Congress attempted to further improve summer food perform-

ance in thirteen states by approving a pilot project that simplifies accounting requirements for some sponsors, reduces paperwork, and allows for higher reimbursement for meals and snacks. Oregon is not one of these states.

Known as the "Lugar pilot" – named for Senator Lugar (Indiana), who proposed the pilot – these states had a combined 8.9 percent increase in summer food participation in 2001 while the rest of the nation decreased by a total of 3.3 percent.

In June 2002, Senator Lugar introduced a new bill that would allow all states to take advantage of the simpler and more flexible pilot rules. *See the "Take Five" action on this page.*

Reauthorization of child nutrition programs in 2003

Next year, Congress will take up legislation to reauthorize all of the federal child nutrition programs. Watch for more information and updates in the coming months.

For more information on SFSP in Oregon

To find out how to become a summer food sponsor in 2003, contact Barbara Cracknell, (503) 378-3600 x 2619, barbara.cracknell@state.or.us. To learn more about all the federal child nutrition programs in Oregon, go to www.ode.state.or.us/nutrition. For the location and hours of the summer food site nearest you, call **1-800-SAFENET** (800-723-3638).

State balances budget on unsteady legs

At the close of the third Special Session of the Oregon Legislature on June 30, lawmakers cobbled together a collection of cuts, one-time revenue fixes, and some new revenue to address the state's \$860 million shortfall.

Oregonians will vote on the revenue proposals in a special September 17th election. Measure 19 would create a rainy day fund for K-12 education by taking \$150 million from the Education Endowment Fund (this is a smaller version of Measure 13 that failed in the May election). Measure 20 would increase the cigarette tax by 60 cents a pack.

If one or both of these revenue proposals fail to pass, there could be yet another special session called to re-balance the budget. Even if they do pass, the one-time revenue fixes and potential for an increased deficit after the fall revenue forecast pose daunting challenges for the new Governor and the 2003 State Legislature. Budget analysts are predicting a possible \$1.5 billion deficit for the 2003-05 biennium.

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

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Food stamps and other victories in the Farm Bill!

In May 2002, President Bush signed the "Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002" into law. Known as the Farm Bill, this legislation was a huge victory for anti-hunger advocates. Highlights include:

Food stamps for legal immigrant children. Restores food stamp eligibility to all legal immigrant children, regardless of date of U.S. entry (effective 10/1/03). Restores cut made in 1996.

Food stamps for legal immigrant adults. Restores food stamp eligibility for legal immigrants who have been in the U.S. for five years (effective 4/1/03), and restores food stamp eligibility to disabled legal immigrants

who entered the U.S. after 1996 (effective 10/1/02). Restores cuts made in 1996.

Food stamp benefit and program improvements. Provides state option for five months of transitional food stamp benefits to families leaving welfare (Oregon to start 10/1/02). Increases the standard deduction and indexes it to inflation. Allows states to simplify other deductions. Reforms quality control oversight system to make it more fair to states.

Commodities for food banks. Provides \$140 million a year for commodity purchases (up \$40 mil a year) and \$60 million a year for storage and distribution costs (up \$10 mil a year).

Farmers' markets. Provides additional funding for 2002: \$5 million for the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) and \$15 million for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. Funds SFMNP by \$15 million a year through fiscal year 2007.

For more information, go to www.usda.gov/farmbill.

THANK YOU to everyone who made phone calls, wrote letters, and sent emails on the Farm Bill. A special thanks to our Members of Congress and their staff for listening and responding to our concerns. Together, we made a difference!



TANF Reauthorization stalls in Congress

Since the Senate Finance Committee passed the "tripartisan" reauthorization bill for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program in late June, movement has slowed, and advocates are uncertain whether TANF Reauthorization will occur this year.

The Finance Committee bill, while not including all the provisions advocates would like to see in the TANF program, is a major improvement over the House-passed version.

The TANF program (formerly Aid to Families with Dependent Children or AFDC) is the main federal income safety net for poor families with children.

Senators from both parties on the Finance Committee would like to see this bill move forward quickly to a Senate floor vote with the hope that conference discussions with the House could

produce the necessary compromise so that reauthorization could be completed this year. Those who want to see quick action on the bill hope to avoid the intensely partisan context of the approaching November elections. Others suggest a temporary continuation of the program for 2003 as the best solution, giving Congress more time to address TANF Reauthorization next year.

Because of major differences between the House and Senate versions right now (with the House version supported by the President), many believe the chances of completing a conference bill with the House and reaching agreement with the President are highly unlikely under the most optimistic conditions.

The federal deficit is growing by the day, and appropriations bills are still awaiting action in the Senate. The bigger challenge facing Congress right now is moving Homeland Security legislation. In addition, the issue seen as having the greatest political punch is prescription drugs for the elderly.

It is still important to contact Oregon's Senators, asking them to push for passage of the Senate Finance Committee bill while considering companion bills to increase funding for child care and support services for people facing barriers to employment. The Senate is expected to take its summer break from August 5 until after Labor Day.

Food Stamps ■ WIC ■ Children's Meal Programs
Oregon Health Plan ■ Immunizations
Call 1-800-SAFENET!

1-800-723-3638

V/TDD and Spanish/multilingual