

PA Hunger Advocate

Promoting Nutrition and Food Security

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In this issue

[Welcome](#)
[State Leg. Update](#)
[Federal Update](#)
[Economic Recovery](#)
[Bill](#)
[PA Hunger Caucus](#)
[Outreach News](#)
[Events](#)

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From the Desk of the Executive Director



There has been much fanfare surrounding the gains made in a more compassionate Federal budget – relative to domestic spending on a broad range of issues affecting low-income persons – as well as in the additional financial boost many of these programs will realize as part of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. While the positive buzz is much deserved in terms of addressing the ongoing and ever-escalating needs of Americans still reeling from an economy that has shown only slight glimmers of a hopeful bottoming out in recent days, the coming months will be a time when anti-hunger advocates must be even more diligent in assuring the promises have been delivered.

None of which is more important than the Child Nutrition Reauthorization.

Although there are issues to be sure – increased funding for improvements across all childhood feeding programs up for reauthorization have been budgeted but are still insufficient, compounded by the deficit-neutral requirement further hampering prospects of budgeting the necessary funds – both can be surmounted with constant and continuous pressure placed on the relevant players in Washington. The stars seem to be aligned in the realization among many in Congress and the Administration that proper nutrition is at base a birthright and the only means to making inroads to a whole host of problems, with underperforming students and an obesity epidemic at the forefront.

Please stay in touch with the process via Hunger Action's website and get involved when you can. The President's pledge to end childhood hunger by 2015 hangs in the balance.

On the State Legislative Front

Senate Bill 9

Re-introduced from the last session of the General Assembly, **Senate Bill 9** (PN 356)– an Act requiring identification of lawful presence in the United States as a prerequisite to the receipt of public benefits – was passed by the Senate on April 1. It was referred to the State Government Committee in the House on April 3. As of this writing, the committee has not scheduled any meetings through June 30 to take up this piece of legislation. Because many citizens do not possess photo identification, Hunger Action will closely monitor this legislation, as it would serve to preclude access to the public benefits to which

they would otherwise be entitled. We will keep you posted through the newsletter and alerts on our website – www.pahunger.org – and you can contact me at jquattrocchi@pahunger.org for further status reports.

House Bill 174 (PN 901) is legislation intended to address a varied food safety inspection system, including multiple pieces of current law that cover food safety and security issues across Pennsylvania. Language in the bill provides for the implementation of actions for the protection of public health, will make the inspection process more uniform through the inclusion of a reporting requirement and establishes a state-wide data base of food facilities that will enhance food defense and security which will allow improved and more rapid communication. With regard to the licensure and operation of “retail food facilities” a licensor (Dept. of Agriculture, county or local Health Dept.) can choose to exempt from licensing “a food bank owned by a charitable nonprofit entity and operated for charitable or religious purposes”, as well as “a soup kitchen owned by a charitable nonprofit entity and operated for charitable or religious purposes”. As this permissive language has the potential to imperil the ongoing operation of key food security resources, Hunger Action will keep you apprised of developments pertaining to this legislation, which was re-committed to Appropriations on March 10. Questions may be directed to jquattrocchi@pahunger.org.

Senate Bill 850

Two significant events recently have occurred relative to the Commonwealth’s current and future financial picture. On the revenue front, April tax receipts (the most anticipated month) were appreciably lower than projected and with May and June holding no promise of a turnaround, the projected shortfall for this fiscal year moved up to estimates in the \$2.6 billion to \$3+ billion range. The implications for the upcoming fiscal year are even worse as the 2008-09 shortfall initially pegged at \$2.3 billion is still growing with no end in sight. In the context of an eroding revenue base the Senate passed, on a party-line vote, **Senate Bill 850** (PN 953) which proposes spending \$24.6 billion in state General Fund dollars (approximating 2005-06 expenditure levels). Even with the inclusion of \$2.7 billion in stimulus funds, the resulting increase in total state spending to \$27.3 billion is still \$1.7 billion less than the Governor’s proposed \$29 billion spending plan. In order to balance the budget, the Senate has chosen ‘clear cutting’ approach, slashing programs across the board, rejecting all other options. As the pain of losers and bigger losers is certainly widespread, those line items pertaining to food and nutrition were not left unscathed. The State Food Purchase Program was reduced by \$1 million, leaving it flat-funded from the current fiscal year, the same fate befalling the Farmers Market Nutrition Program at \$2.226 million and the Neighborhood Assistance Program at \$18 million. The Rx for School Food Services was cut another million to \$3 million (well off the \$6 million in the 07-08 budget), while Healthy Farms/Healthy Schools was zeroed out. The PASS program hasn’t seen the light of day in either the Governor’s or the Senate’s spending plans. These programs are vital to food insecure Pennsylvanians and Hunger Action will maintain the fight for its original budget recommendations, which can be found in the April newsletter. The legislation was referred to House Appropriations on May 7 and the committee has scheduled public hearings for Thursday, May 21 and

Friday, May 22. Contact me at jquattrocchi@pahunger.org if you have any questions.

On the Federal Front

On Wednesday, April 29th Congress passed its **FY 2010 federal budget**, with a price tag of \$3.5 trillion. The level of funding in the spending plan for next year – although higher than this year's budget - is \$10 billion less than the President's request for non-defense domestic discretionary funding. Passage of the Budget Conference Report allows the Appropriations Committee to allocate funding for its 12 subcommittees and also paves the way for the Senate Agriculture Committee and the House Education and Labor Committee to begin the child nutrition reauthorization process.

The upcoming **child nutrition reauthorization** could prove problematic as the President has proposed an extra \$1 billion per year for child nutrition program improvements- \$5 billion over the course of the five-year reauthorization – which falls woefully short of the \$20 billion increase over the same time period being pushed by anti-hunger advocates. Moreover, the budget contains Deficit-Neutral Reserve Funds for child nutrition reauthorization, meaning that any new program costs will have to be offset either through spending cuts to programs within the aforementioned authorizing committees' jurisdiction or through raising new revenues (under the jurisdiction of the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee). Within this backdrop, it seems an impossibility to fund the programs up for reauthorization at the levels needed to deliver on President Obama's pledge to end childhood hunger by 2015.

H.R. 1869 was introduced on April 2. The bill, requiring a White House Conference on Food and Nutrition to be held by December 31, 2010, was referred to the House Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry on April 28. Because the findings included in the text of the bill say it all in calling for this long overdue conference, they are printed here in their entirety:

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds the following:

- (1) Hunger and undernutrition are political conditions that can be solved.*
- (2) Access to healthy food and good nutrition should be a fundamental right of all Americans.*
- (3) Nearly 40 years have passed since the United States convened a White House conference to comprehensively address the issues of food, hunger, health, and nutrition in America.*
- (4) More than 35,500,000 Americans live in households that face a constant struggle against hunger, 12,600,000 of whom are children and 5,000,000 of whom are seniors, the disabled, and the critically ill.*
- (5) The Government spends more than \$55,000,000,000 every year responding to the concurrent epidemics of hunger and undernutrition, yet the number of Americans facing hunger continues to grow and our Nation's nutritional health is declining.*
- (6) Conservative cost estimates show that the true cost of hunger and illness related to undernutrition in America is at least \$90,000,000,000 a year, more than half of which is paid by Medicare and Medicaid.*
- (7) Appropriate food and nutrition can save the United States billions of dollars in health care costs by preventing or delaying the*

progression to late-stage disease for tens of millions of Americans who live with chronic diseases, such as diabetes, HIV, AIDS, and heart disease. The costs of the effects and treatments of those diseases are significantly exacerbated by hunger, food insecurity, and undernutrition.

(8) A national discussion of the root causes of hunger, food insecurity, and undernutrition, as well as identification of solutions to these epidemics, can lead to action to implement such solutions and to end hunger in America.

Updates on these and other federal legislation will be provided in the newsletter and on Hunger Action's website. For further information contact Joe Quattrocchi at jquattrocchi@pahunger.org.

PA Stimulus Update

As was reported in the April newsletter, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) on February 17. As a result, Pennsylvania will receive approximately \$16 billion, which includes billions of dollars in direct relief for taxpayers and more than \$9.8 billion in formula-driven funding. These funds are to be allocated as follows:

· Health Care	\$4.00 billion
· Education	\$2.56 billion
· Transportation Infrastructure	\$1.40 billion
· Job Training and Relief for Pennsylvanians	\$1.10 billion
· Other Infrastructure and Housing	\$476 million
· Energy Independence	\$373 million

A website has been established – www.recovery.pa.gov – where you can learn about the economic recovery, including how the money will be used to help Pennsylvania residents and businesses. In terms of transparency and accountability, the site will also provide news and status reports on ARRA funds so that the public may monitor and provide feedback on their use.

Outreach News

School Breakfast Mailing

Pennsylvania Hunger Action recently sent out a mailing to all 501 school districts statewide, reminding the districts of two initiatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Education that will facilitate eligibility for, and implementation of, free and reduced price school meals (particularly school breakfast).

The department issued a revised policy directive that will allow school breakfasts to be included as part of instructional time during regularly scheduled homeroom periods and classroom instruction. This directive will make it easier for many schools to serve breakfast, and also encourage breakfast in the classroom and homeroom which are very effective in increasing breakfast participation.

Direct Certification: PDE is now posting (to COMPASS) an updated file twice a year, in January and July, with newly enrolled food stamp households by school district. That information can be used by districts in a data match - school enrollment against food stamp enrollment – which is mandated per the July list, but discretionary on

the second list. Where a positive match occurs, children are then directly certified as eligible for free school meals, and no paper application is needed.

Pennsylvania Hunger Action also included a school breakfast survey in the mailing, asking each district to assess the state of their school breakfast programs as well as asking if they need assistance starting or expanding their breakfast programs. So far the response has been substantial, and Hunger Action plans to follow up and provide support for the schools asking for assistance in the coming months.

For more information, please call Chad Newton at (717) 233-6705 or e-mail him at cnewton@pahunger.org.

Food Stamps - Full Speed Ahead

Hunger Action continues to enroll Pennsylvanians into the Food Stamp/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. These days it seems the Food Stamp/SNAP phone lines are ringing off the hook. Similarly, staff is seeing an increased interest in the program when they are out and about at community events throughout the South Central PA region. If you have an event coming up or know of an organization whose clientele might benefit from the program, please feel free to contact the Center's Food Stamp Outreach Manager, Laura Tobin, at ltobin@pahunger.org or the Food Stamp/SNAP Line at 1-800-634-2033.

Events



One Great Lunch – 10th Anniversary

April 20 marked the 10th Anniversary of the Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center's "One Great Lunch with 8 Great Chefs" event.

Participants enjoyed a delicious and entertaining luncheon prepared by top local chefs. This year's menu included Roasted Apple and Nut Salad, Yellow Squash, Zucchini and Tomato Risotto, Braised Beef Short Ribs, and a mouth-watering dessert called Chocolate Obsession.

The chefs also provided demonstrations – both live and on screen - on how the delectable meals are prepared.

Additionally, as a part of the One Great Lunch 10th Anniversary festivities, former PA Hunger Action Center employee Sue Mitchem was recognized for her contributions to One Great Lunch. *(pictured above, with Hunger Action Board President Timothy Whelan, far left, Hunger Action Executive Director Joseph Quattrocchi, far right, and her grandson Jack.)*

Also receiving special recognition during the event were The Hershey Company and Giant Foods. Both companies were recognized for graciously being One Great Lunch sponsors for all ten years that the event has taken place, and Giant Foods was also recognized for being the event's special 10th Anniversary Sponsor.

If you have any further questions about One Great Lunch, or would like another copy of the recipe booklet, please call Chad Newton at 717-233-6705 or e-mail at cnewton@pahunger.org.

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