

PA Hunger Advocate

Promoting Nutrition and Food Security
Volume 1, Issue 6
September 2009



In this issue

[ED Column](#)
[State Budget](#)
[Child Nutrition](#)
[SNAP Update](#)
[Acting Ag Secretary Named](#)
[New Census Data](#)

Support Our Work

Support Hunger Action's fight against hunger with a [donation](#).

Join Our Cause

If you know someone who may be interested in receiving this newsletter, you can easily [forward to a friend](#).

Join Our Cause On Facebook

[facebook](#)

[Click here](#)

Executive Director's Column:

Not so many months ago I wrote a brief remembrance of Jim Stephenson, a founder and the first director of Hunger Action's predecessor – the Pennsylvania Coalition on Food and Nutrition (PCFN). I didn't know Jim but knew much about his work on behalf of hungry Pennsylvanians.

It is now my privilege to remember another state-wide leader in the early movement to eradicate hunger from our midst. Patrick Temple-West was also a founding member of the PCFN back in the late 1970's. He stayed connected to what became the PA Hunger Action Center through all those years and was an esteemed Board member when he passed away in early August. I had the pleasure of working with Pat for a little more than a year and a half.

During that time I came to appreciate two qualities Pat demonstrated whenever I was in his presence. One was an unwavering commitment to social justice – with food security for all at the top of the list – and the other was that he always spoke up about what he believed in. His was a trusted and seasoned voice on our governing Board. Whether he agreed with you or not – and he'd let you know either way – his position was always focused on the needs of those less fortunate. He had a gentlemanly manner about him and carried himself with a dignity that was evident to his colleagues. The oft-expressed sentiment that "you'll be sorely missed" was never more sincere than in marking Pat's passing.

It was an honor to have known him.

*Joe Quattrocchi,
Executive Director*

State Budget Process is Moving Along...

Although at a glacial pace, the drawn out process to get a state budget enacted appears to be in the home stretch. With an agreement in principle, the "three caucus budget" fixes the spend number at \$27.95 billion for the 2009-10 fiscal year (or what is left of it). Based on the original figures – Governor Rendell proposed a \$28.9 billion budget in February, and Senate Republicans countered with \$27.3 in May – they could have split the difference on a spend number (\$28.1 billion) long ago. Highlights of the package – not endorsed by House Republicans

at the time of this writing – include:

- the budget is less than what was spent in the previous fiscal year by approximately \$400 million
- the budget assumes zero growth in state revenues (overcoming a sticking point in that the original three caucus version called for .81 percent growth in 2009-10)
- there are no “broad based” tax increases (overcoming an issue with the Governor’s position to increase the Personal Income Tax by a half percent over three years)
- the budget is propped up by \$1.5 billion in federal stimulus money
- all of the \$755 million in the Rainy Day Fund has been used
- Governor Rendell’s fight to maintain an increased level of support for basic education (originally a \$415 million increase) was still a big winner with a \$300 million increase (5%)

These highlights – except for the last point – all pertain to the financing and not the programmatic (expenditure) side of the equation, as these particulars are still being worked out. Relative to financing, it is worth noting that the use of \$2 billion in one-time revenues far outweighs that of \$1.2 billion in recurring revenues in propping up this budget. This only forestalls tough economic realities which will have to be confronted in the development of future budgets.

But for now, it is hoped, the light at the end of the budget tunnel is getting brighter. With comments from Senate Republican leadership that a budget may not be on the Governor’s desk for another week to ten days, and with his immediate signature thereon, the flow of funds (especially to cash-strapped human services providers) could be *just* a couple of months away. And the process starts all over again a couple months after that. Geez.....

Joe Quattrocchi

jquattrocchi@pahunger.org

...While Child Nutrition Reauthorization Stalls

With health care reform at the top of the agenda – and some observers theorizing climate change will be next up – the reauthorization of childhood feeding programs is sliding down Congress’ priority list.

The programs up for reauthorization pertain primarily to meals programs which run the gamut from breakfast, to lunch to afterschool to summer time. These are the specifics:

- **The National School Lunch Program** guarantees that millions of low-income children receive a healthy lunch during their school day. All children can participate in the program, but low income children qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Children who qualify for free or reduced price school lunch also qualify for the School Breakfast Program.

- **The School Breakfast Program** ensures that children across the country can get a healthy breakfast at school. As with the case of school lunches, children are eligible for free, reduced price or paid breakfasts based on their families' incomes.

- **The Child and Adult Care Food Program** reimburses child care centers, Head Start Programs, family child care homes, homeless shelters and afterschool programs for snacks and meals served to children. Generally, children under the age of 12, as well as certain disabled adults can participate, but homeless shelters and afterschool programs can serve children 18 and under.

- **The Summer Food Service Program** ensures that children (18 and under) who depend on school lunch and breakfast during the school year still have access to free, nutritious meals and snacks during the summer when school is out. It provides reimbursements to schools, local government agencies and private nonprofit organizations that serve free meals and snacks to children at sites located in low-income areas or that serve primarily low-income children.

The other major program – although not an entitlement – that is included in the reauthorization package is the **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)**. WIC provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, and access to health care to low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants and children up to age 5. The monthly WIC food package is a combination of foods that improve nutrition for these participants.

With current authorization of these programs set to expire on September 30, 2009, a Continuing Resolution (presumably) will be enacted to continue authorization and funding at levels set with the 2004 reauthorization. Hopefully the resolution will be for a term of six months, as this will afford anti-hunger advocates and others with a stake in the upcoming legislation an opportunity to redouble efforts with Congress to extend access to and enhance participation in these vital food resources for low-income children. To learn more and find out how to get involved please visit our [website](#). We will update the site as the process evolves.

Joe Quattrocchi

jquattrocchi@pahunger.org

SNAP Update

Participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is up yet again across the Commonwealth. In August, DPW issued over \$180 million in benefits to over 1.42 million Pennsylvanians. This is a participation increase of 3.2 percent over the previous month and 18.7 percent over the past year. Whereas the percent of Pennsylvanians participating in SNAP had been 9.6 percent in 2008, this figure has jumped to 11.4 percent.

Like our non-profit partners and the County Assistance Offices, Hunger Action is amazed by the increased level of interest in SNAP but struggles to meet the demand. In an effort to reach out

to those who are in need but still face obstacles to enrollment in the program, Hunger Action provides a toll-free line 1-800-634-2033 and will be available at a growing number of community events. [Check our website for up-to-date happenings.](#)

Laura Tobin
ltobin@pahunger.org

Acting Agriculture Secretary Named

On September 14, Governor Rendell formally nominated Russell Redding to serve as Pennsylvania's 24th Secretary of Agriculture. With a long and distinguished career in public service – including the past fifteen years in the PA Department of Agriculture – Redding is uniquely equipped to assume leadership of the department. In addition to his qualifications for the position, Acting Secretary Redding's commitment to food security for all Pennsylvanians places a high profile anti-hunger ally in a key government post. With his confirmation to be taken up by the Senate in the near future, you can help his candidacy by contacting your Senator to urge his or her support of Acting Secretary Redding. [To find out more please visit our website.](#)

Joe Quattrocchi
jquattrocchi@pahunger.org

Poverty Up; Income Down

Released this month, the Current Population Survey (CPS) reveals that poverty rose to an average of 10.7 percent in the Commonwealth in 2007 and 2008. That represents an estimated 1.304 million Pennsylvanians. Nationally, the poverty rate reached 12.9 percent. These latest figures indicate that Pennsylvania's poverty increased by 1.7 percent over the past eight years - a greater increase than the U.S. at 1.3 percent. The CPS also found that median household income dropped \$1,968 in the state during that same period to \$50,850. PA seems to have fared worse than the nation where the figure only fell \$695 to \$51,233.

Laura Tobin
ltobin@pahunger.org