



2007 Public Policy Agenda

3/7/07

Over 5 million Californians are at risk of hunger and need access to healthy food to thrive and succeed. Food banks help by providing emergency food and partnering with state and federal nutrition programs. Together, we can significantly reduce hunger and malnutrition in California.

1. State Emergency Food

The State of California does not provide annual funding for food banks, although food banks are on the front lines of responding to emergency needs for food. Most recently, the citrus freeze disaster required a rapid expenditure of more than \$2 million from the Governor's Office of Emergency Services to food banks in the 18 counties, for expanded service to disaster victims. State investment in disaster-relief food will improve California's preparedness.

State funding is also required to meet the needs unmet by shrinking federal emergency food programs. While the goal is to feed 3.2 million people in need, currently only 1 million people receive two meals a month with the \$15.7 million in federal funds. What's more, federal emergency food supplied to California has *declined* from 97 million pounds in 2002 to 57 million pounds in 2006. The federal Emergency Food Assistance Program is administered by the State Department of Social Services.

California can better serve people in need of food by investing in the emergency food network:

- \$1 million will allow for disaster-relief food to be pre-positioned in Northern and Southern California locations.
- \$8.1 million will provide enough food to serve one additional meal per month to 1 million people in need (12 million additional meals annually).

2. Access to Federal Food Stamps

California's food stamp program is ranked *last* in the country for access, with only 46% of people in need participating. The State can eliminate barriers that block as many as 2 million eligible people from receiving nearly \$100 per month in federal food aid. The State benefits as well: food stamp benefits are 100% federally funded and deliver \$9.00 of economic impact for every \$5.00 in benefits, including increased state sales tax revenue.

California can take three state options to improve access to food stamps:

- Connect with MediCal: Working families especially benefit, as duplicative paperwork is reduced and good health is reinforced. (A.B. 433, Asm. Jim Beall)
- Simplify Reporting: It's time for California to join the 45 states that have simplified reporting by moving to semi-annual reporting, while preserving program accuracy and integrity. (A.B. 1060, Asm. John Laird)
- End Finger-imaging: This costly system does not increase program integrity, according to a 2003 State audit, yet it can discourage participation and hamper outreach. (A.B. 1382, Asm. Mark Leno)

Other State priorities to reduce hunger and improve nutrition include:

- **Children:** The poorest children are put at risk of hunger, homelessness, and other hardship by the Governor's proposal to eliminate their basic-needs grants and cost-of-living adjustments (CalWORKS). Proposals to cut CalWORKS should be rejected.
- **Seniors:** Senior nutrition and basic-needs grants for seniors and disabled people (SSI/SSP) receive level support in the Governor's budget. Investments in senior nutrition should keep up with the nutrition needs in this growing population.
- **Healthy School Food:** Healthier food at schools helps children learn and grow. More schools should serve school breakfast to all children, and all school meals should include healthy foods.
- **Other Basic Needs:** Many people can't afford the food they need because of the squeeze on their income from health care, housing and other rising costs. The Governor's proposal is a good first step to making health care available to all Californians.

At the Federal level, where the 2007 Farm Bill is under consideration, a strong nutrition title is needed: to improve access, adequacy, and eligibility for the Food Stamp Program and to reverse the decline in emergency food available to food banks through the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP).

The California Association of Food Banks represents 40 food banks working together to build a well-nourished California. Our members include:

Alameda County Community Food Bank
Interfaith Food Bank (Amador)
Community Action Agency of Butte County
Human Resource Council Food Bank
(Calaveras)
Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano Counties
Community Assistance Network (Del Norte)
Food Bank of El Dorado County
Community Food Bank (Fresno)
Food For People (Humboldt)
Imperial Valley Food Bank
Inyo-Mono Advocates for Community Action
Community Action Partnership of Kern County
Food Bank
Kings Community Action Organization
Lake County Community Action Agency
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
Westside Food Bank (Los Angeles)
Madera County Food Bank
Marin Community Food Bank
Mendocino Food and Nutrition Program
Ukiah Community Food Bank (Mendocino)
Merced County Food Bank
Food Bank for Monterey County

Napa Valley Food Bank
Food Bank of Nevada County
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
Community Action Partnership of Orange
County
Senior Gleaners, Inc. (Sacramento)
San Diego Food Bank
San Francisco Food Bank
Second Harvest Food Bank of San Joaquin &
Stanislaus Counties
Emergency Food Bank, Stockton (San Joaquin)
Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo
Food Bank of Santa Barbara County
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara &
San Mateo
Second Harvest Food Bank for Santa Cruz &
San Benito
Redwood Empire Food Bank
FoodLink for Tulare County
Amador/Tuolumne Community Action Food
Bank
Food Share of Ventura County
Food Bank of Yolo County
California Food Policy Advocates

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