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California Food Banks React to U.S. House Slashing Emergency Food Programs
Cuts Pass while Over 20 Percent of Californians Are Unable to Afford Enough Food

Oakland, CA -June 16, 2011 – Today, the House passed the FY2012 Agriculture Appropriations Bill, which slashes food assistance for seniors and local food banks. If enacted, these cuts would prevent hundreds of thousands of Californians from accessing food assistance.

“Budgets can’t be balanced on the backs of those struggling with hunger,” said Sue Sigler, Executive Director of California Association of Food Banks. “We understand that Congress must make tough choices regarding the federal budget, but programs for those most in danger of hunger absolutely should not be cut. At a time when one in five Californians is experiencing or at risk of hunger, our elected leaders must strengthen the safety net, not weaken it.”

The House bill would cut \$63 million from the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), as well as \$38 million from the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). Both TEFAP and CSFP provide food commodities to those struggling with hunger through a statewide network of food banks, soup kitchens and pantries. TEFAP provides the state’s food banks with millions of pounds of food commodities and storage and distribution support while CSFP currently provides food assistance to over 75,000 low-income California families every month, 97 percent of whom are seniors. The House-passed bill would enact a 20 percent cut in food commodities coming into food banks as well as a 20 percent cut to food assistance for seniors.

The House passed these cuts as 20 percent of Californians are reporting that they are unable to afford enough food, according to a [report](#) issue by the Food Research Action Center (FRAC). The FRAC report also breaks down food hardship by California Congressional district (pgs 17-18). Ironically, many of the Representatives who voted today to slash emergency food programs have high rates of food hardship amongst their own constituents.

“This latest vote illustrates that our Representatives need to better understand the high level of hunger prevalent in the communities they represent.” said Sigler. “Food banks continue to see unprecedented need across the state with most struggling to keep up with requests for emergency food. I invite every California Representative to visit their local food bank to learn more about the day-to-day struggle with hunger that their constituents are experiencing.”

California food banks are reporting that demand for services is up 30-50% since the recession began. California’s food banks are already stretched beyond capacity, and with further cuts to these core emergency food programs, they will be unable to meet a vastly increased need.

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About the California Association of Food Banks

The mission of California Association of Food Banks is to provide a unified voice among food banks to maximize their ability to build a well nourished California. For more information on the California Association of Food Banks please visit our website at www.cafoodbanks.org.