

Messaging for Success

May 4, 2015
Prepared for
CAFB Conference 2015
by
Ellen Vollinger
FRAC Legal Director

Public Attitudes About Hunger

- Over the years, FRAC has conducted a series of polls and analyses to explore voters' feelings on hunger, nutrition, and other issues.
- The findings from our 2014 poll reflect an ongoing trend: Americans believe that hunger is an extremely serious issue and look to the government for leadership in this fight.

<http://frac.org/press-room/polling-data/>

Polling Results

- **45 percent of Americans say hunger in the U.S. is a “serious problem.” Just 15 percent do not believe hunger is a problem at all in US today.**
- **More than two-thirds believe that children often eat less nutritious and cheap food so their parents can scrape together money to pay the rent, that seniors often choose whether to pay for prescriptions or food, that families could go a week without fresh produce, and that many children are going hungry in the summer when school is out.**
- **Many believe that hunger is more of an issue today than it was before the recession. (56 percent of Republicans, 54 percent of Democrats and 60 percent of Independents echoing this statement).**
- **Two out of five Americans have either experienced hunger in the past year or personally know someone who has – that includes nearly half of people aged 18 to 34.**
- **Nearly three in 10 Americans (and half of millennials) say that either they or a member of their immediate family have used government food assistance programs in the past couple of years. That includes at least 25 percent of nearly every major demographic subgroup.**

Polling: Women & Men

- **Women are more likely to recognize hunger as an issue, but both women and men agree that government needs to do more to address this nationwide crisis.**
- **Fifty-two percent of women say hunger in the U.S. is a serious problem while 36 percent of men say the same. Sixty-three percent of women, compared to 49 percent of men, believe that hunger has worsened since the recession.**
- **Fifty-one percent of women and 45 percent of men say that Congress needs to do more to address the problem. Only 18 percent overall think that fewer resources should be allocated on hunger relief programs.**

Polling Re Government Role

- A majority look to the government for leadership, and recognize the strengths of the federal nutrition programs.
- The belief that the government needs to display leadership in the fight against hunger is very strong. More than 80 percent of Democrats and 70 percent of Independents look to the federal and local government to lead, and 50 percent of Republicans believe that the federal government has responsibility.
- 61 percent agree that “we should support and improve government-sponsored food assistance programs so that more people who are struggling can get the help they need.” Eighty-one percent of Democrats, 60 percent of Independents, and 39 percent of Republicans agree with this statement.
- People believe that the child nutrition programs – especially school meals and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program – are leading to better outcomes for children by helping them learn and improving their overall health and well-being. By more than three to one, Americans believe that spending on such programs should increase (50 percent) rather than decrease (15 percent).

Messaging for Policy Change Goals

- **Long-Term**

e.g., Creating Economic Justice; Ending Hunger and Poverty

- **More Immediate**

e.g., Protect, Preserve & Enhance SNAP

**e.g., Promote/Stop Federal/State
Legislation/Administrative Action**

Audiences & Messengers

- **Public Officials**
- **General Public (Segments Within)**
- **Media**
- **Influencers**
- **Community Members**
- **Others**

Case Study: SNAP Matters

- **SNAP reduces hunger/food insecurity**
- **SNAP reduces poverty**
- **SNAP promotes health**
- **SNAP provides low-income people with means to purchase food in mainstream way**
- **SNAP boosts local economies – each \$1 in federal SNAP benefits = \$1.79 in economic activity**

Stakeholders

- **Low-income people**
- **Faith-Based Groups**
- **Community service providers**
- **Homeless shelters**
- **Health professionals**
- **Food Industry/Retailers**
- **Farmers**
- **Conservation Groups**
- **Educators**
- **Senior serving agencies**
- **Veterans and military groups**
- **State and Local Elected Officials**
- **Program administrators**
- **And more.....**

Diverse Voices For SNAP Matter

- Some messages about SNAP resonate with particular audiences and carry more credibility when delivered by a particular source
- Examples of broad array of statements in support of SNAP during 2014 Farm Bill process are posted at <http://frac.org/letters-and-statements-supporting-snap/>

SNAP Messages: SNAP & Farm Bill

- Don't reopen Farm Bill letter:
http://frac.org/pdf/Revised_Ag_Community_Farm_bill_ltr.pdf
“The undersigned 392 organizations, representing America’s agriculture, nutrition, conservation, rural development, finance, forestry, energy, trade, labor, equipment manufactures and crop insurance sectors, strongly urge you to reject calls for additional cuts to programs within the jurisdiction of the Senate and House Agriculture Committees.”
- Rep. Peterson (D-MN):
<http://democrats.agriculture.house.gov/press/PRArticle.aspx?NewsID=1222>
“As I’ve said, I think it’s beneficial for the Committee to learn as much as we can about SNAP while resisting attempts to open up the farm bill or to separate SNAP from the farm bill. I am very supportive of the work done by local food banks and other charitable organizations across the country. They not only offer food but important outreach services to help those in need. However, they do not have the funding, capacity or flexibility to fully replace SNAP, as some might suggest.”

SNAP Messages: Impact on States & Cities

- NCSL:
<http://www.ncsl.org/print/immig/immigrantandfoodstamps1004.pdf>

“[T]he 1996 food stamp eligibility restrictions for legal immigrants represented a cost-shift to the states.”

- Letter from 19
Mayors: http://frac.org/Farm_Bill_1_27_2014_final_correction.pdf

“As mayors, every day we see the importance of SNAP benefits...In addition, since every dollar in SNAP benefits generates up to \$1.80 in local economic activity, cuts will also have a negative impact on our urban economies.”

SNAP Messages: Retailer Issues

- **Food Retailers Messages:**

<http://www.fmi.org/blog/view/fmi-blog/2015/03/25/snap-do-not-erase-15-years-of-efficiencies>

“FMI expressed our opposition to the state block grant provision in a letter to House offices and highlighted the importance of maintaining a consistent federal standard for SNAP, which has served to improve administrative efficiencies, decrease human error and improve the ability to identify and prevent fraud.”

SNAP Messages: Anti-Hunger Groups

NAHO letter: http://frac.org/pdf/naho_letter_w_logos.pdf

“Millions of seniors, people with disabilities, children, veterans, low- wage workers, and people seeking jobs will likely be harmed if the program is weakened.

- SNAP: reduces hunger and food insecurity; supports the nation’s farms and regular commercial food outlets; is a fast and effective response to local or national economic downturns and to natural disasters; reduces poverty and lifts families out of deep poverty; and keeps the network of food banks and other emergency food providers from being totally overwhelmed.**
- SNAP is well-targeted: 92 percent of benefits go to households with incomes below the poverty line; and over one-quarter (29%) of participants are in households that include senior citizens or people with disabilities; over two-thirds (70%) are in families with children. Among SNAP households with a working-age adult who isn’t disabled, more than 80 percent work while receiving SNAP or in the year before or after a typical month receiving SNAP. Receipt of SNAP in early childhood improves high school graduation rates, adult earnings and adult health.”**

SNAP Messages: Real Stories

- SNAP Participant's Voice: <http://theplate.nationalgeographic.com/2015/04/16/while-u-s-economy-improves-food-insecurity-lingers/#.VTCJk8kSHJw.twitter>
“Pierce was a paralegal and a single mom who often found herself scrambling for her family’s next meal, but she kept up appearances. When she was laid off in 2010, she knew she really needed help...Pierce persevered, shopping at night, looking for jobs during the day. She was on the program for about 14 months....But she will never forget what it was like to be in need. She advocates for the hungry and helped get a state bill passed that would stagger SNAP payments out over a week so grocery stores could stay better stocked.”
- Petition, #FillUpYourPlate Campaign, and Story telling: <http://frac.org/leg-act-center/>
- <http://mcgovern.house.gov/FillUpYourPlate>
“SNAP makes it possible for my son to survive. He is a hard worker with a low wage job and needs SNAP to survive” --Celeste

SNAP Messages: Health & Economic Impacts

- SNAP matters for Building Healthy Communities: http://frac.org/pdf/food_ag_policy_collab_brochure.pdf

“SNAP promotes food security, lessens poverty, protects children’s health and generates economic activity. It is structured to respond to changes in need, whether due to economic downturns or natural disasters. Each \$1 in federal SNAP benefits generates \$1.79 in economic activity, boosting the entire food system, from producers to truckers to grocery clerks.”

SNAP Messages: Important for Vulnerable Populations

- **AARP: http://frac.org/pdf/aarp_sep_2013.pdf**
“Hungry children, seniors and families cannot and should not have to wait on the economic and political sidelines for access to an effective nutrition safety net. The slow economy, higher prices for food and energy, and the impending November 1, 2013 elimination of the SNAP benefit boost from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) have made the situation acute for all concerned.”

Data for SNAP Messaging

- Food Hardship Data
- SNAP Data by Congressional District
- 50 Years of SNAP Infographic
- SNAP Caseload Trends
- U-6 Unemployment
- <http://frac.org/leg-act-center/>
- <http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/snapfood-stamps/infographic-50-years-of-snap/>
- <http://frac.org/reports-and-resources/snapfood-stamp-monthly-participation-data/>

Resources and Contact Info

- FRAC Website: www.frac.org
- FRAC Digest:
http://org2.salsalabs.com/o/5118/p/salsa/web/common/public/signup?signup_page_KEY=2273
- FRAC on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/foodresearchandactioncenter>
- FRAC on Twitter: @fractweets
- Ellen Vollinger: evollinger@frac.org