Food Hardship: A National Problem

Food hardship is far too common in every corner of the nation. It is crucial that the nation build an economy and develop public supports that will dramatically decrease food hardship numbers and do so quickly. Essential steps include: a growing economy that provides jobs at decent wages, shares prosperity and pulls households out of hunger and poverty; improved income supports (e.g. unemployment insurance, refundable tax credits) that help struggling workers and families; and strengthened federal nutrition programs (SNAP/food stamps, school meals, WIC, summer, after school and child care food) that reach more people in need.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau data released on September 10, 2009:

- 39.8 million (13.2%) Americans lived in poverty, an increase of 2.3 million from 2007.
- 14.1 million (19%) of all children under age 18 were poor, an increase of 0.8% from 2007.
- 3.7 million (9.7%) of all Americans 65 and older were poor.

The poverty rate for non-Hispanic whites was 8.6%, 24% for blacks, 23.2% for Hispanics and 11.8% for Asians.

To set the poverty level, the U.S. Census Bureau uses a set of income thresholds based on the Consumer Price Index. The income thresholds were originally set using the cost of a minimal diet (based on eating patterns in the 1950’s), multiplied by 3.
are high in virtually every state, metropolitan statistical area, and congressional district.

Let’s take a look at Louisiana. Louisiana ranks 5th in the nation of states with the highest rates of food hardship.

Metropolitan areas also show a high rate of food hardship. Metropolitan areas include New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner at #8 and Baton Rouge at #21.

Food hardship and poverty are prevalent in all of Louisiana’s congressional districts. Of the 436 congressional districts in the United States Louisiana’s congressional districts rank as follows in poverty/food hardship:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congressional District</th>
<th>Poverty/Food Hardship</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CD #1 Scalise</td>
<td>96</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD #2 Cao</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD #3 Melancon</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD #4 Fleming</td>
<td>119</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD #5 Alexander</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD #6 Cassidy</td>
<td>184</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD #7 Boustany, Jr.</td>
<td>157</td>
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</tbody>
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Louisiana Parishes with poverty rate above 20% include:

- Franklin 31.5%
- Natchitoches 30.4%
- St. Landry 30.4%
- Morehouse 29.9%
- Lincoln 25.6%
- Pointe Coupee 25.6%
- Washington 24.8%
- Tangipahoa 24.2%
- Evangeline 23.9%
- Orleans 23.8%
- Avoyelles 23.6%
- E. Feliciana 22.7%
- Acadia 22.2%
- Caddo 22.1%
- St. Mary 21.9%
- Ouachita 21.4%
- Union 21.4%
- Sabine 20.6%
- Assumption 20.5%
- Iberia 20.2%
- Richland 20.1%

Since hurricanes Katrina and Rita the change in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP – formerly known as Food Stamps) participation increased by 54% in Orleans, 26% in Jefferson, 142% in St. Bernard, and 15% in Plaquemines.

CONTACT YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS AND LET THEM KNOW THAT FOOD HARDSHIP IN LOUISIANA IS UNACCEPTABLE, ESPECIALLY FOR THE CHILDREN OF LOUISIANA.

URGE THEM TO SUPPORT RESTORING CUT MADE IN THE SNAP AND CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS.
FOOD STAMPS TO PAY FOR MEDICAID

Robbing Pete to pay Paul is not a solution that will help feed hungry people or provide health care for poor people. The U.S. Congress passed a $26 billion state aid bill that would be used by states to pay for critical items such as Medicaid reimbursements and salaries for teachers, firefighters, and police officers. Unfortunately, the bill was paid for by reducing future funds for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP – formerly known as food stamps). Bread for the World President, David Beckmann said, “Taking money from poor, hungry people to help poor, sick people is not the solution.”

“…We are now forced to choose between jobs and healthcare or food for hungry people. This is one of the more egregious cases of robbing Peter to pay Paul.”

James McGovern, D-MA

House members (108 members signed, none from Louisiana) sent a letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, requesting the Leadership to schedule floor consideration on H.R.5504, the Improving Nutrition for America’s Children. This bill provides critical improvements in the school and summer meal programs and will help reduce hunger and obesity in children around the country.

Every five years, Congress reviews the federal child nutrition programs, including school breakfast and lunch, summer Food, Child & Adult Care Food and WIC programs. President Obama and anti-hunger advocates are asking Congress to increase funding for child nutrition programs by $1 billion. This would be a huge step toward ensuring that no child in America goes hungry.

2 IMPORTANT OCTOBER EVENTS

October 16th – Observing the 30th World Food Day. For information go to www.worldfooddayusa.org

October 17th – Bread for the World Sunday. A creative way to involve your church in the work of advocating for hungry people. Order free resources, including bulletin inserts and a scripture study for preaching and discussion, by calling 1-800-822-7323 or go to www.bread.org/go/sunday. Spanish resources available.