



FOOD STAMP BILLS WAITING TO BE SCHEDULED FOR A FLOOR VOTE IN HOUSE

Three bills by Rep. Naishtat relating to the Food Stamp Program passed the House Human Services Committee and have been sent to the House Calendars Committee to be scheduled for a vote by the full House: HB 1627, HB 612, and HB 886. These bills are designed to maximize federal food assistance to low-income Texans and/or reduce the workload of the eligibility staff who process Food Stamp applications. We urge you to call the members of the House Calendars Committee today and ask them to schedule these bills for a vote as soon as possible.

Background

The Food Stamp Program provides critical nutrition assistance to low-income Texans to help them bridge the gap between their earnings and expenses. These benefits are particularly important during an economic recession. Food Stamps are 100 percent federally funded, though the state shares the cost of administering the program with the federal government.

HB 612: Amends the current ban on Food Stamps for drug felons to permit access to these benefits for persons who:

- are on or have completed community supervision; or
- are participating in or have successfully completed drug treatment.

Food Stamps offer a lifeline to ex-offenders to help them reintegrate into society, at the same time reducing recidivism and the state costs of re-incarceration.

HB 886: Exempts Food Stamp recipients who are working at least half-time from participating in the Food Stamp Employment and Training Program and reduces weekly work requirement from 30 hours to 20 hours. This change would ensure that people already working half-time, such as mothers who work part-time to pick up their children after school, do not lose their Food Stamp benefits for failure to meet a work requirement. This change could reduce workload for eligibility staff as well.

HB 1627: Increases Food Stamp benefits for already-eligible families by making all Food Stamp recipients eligible for a \$1 energy assistance payment under the federally funded LiHEAP program. Under federal law, a person who receives a LiHEAP payment automatically receives the highest standard utility deduction when applying for Food Stamps, which increases their Food Stamp benefits. This bill also would reduce workload by simplifying the Food Stamp benefit calculation for eligibility staff, who would no longer have to determine which utility deduction to apply, or calculate actual utility costs when determining a person's benefit allotment.

For more information on the Food Stamp Program, HB 612, and HB 1627, see:

www.cphp.org/files/3/377_HBs_612_1627.pdf.

Action You Can Take:

Please call members of the House Calendars Committee and ask them to schedule HB 612, HB 886, and HB 1627 for a vote as soon as possible.

- Rep. Brian McCall, Chair: (512) 463-0758
- Rep. Eddie Lucio III, Vice-Chair: (512) 463-0606
- Rep. Norma Chavez: (512) 463-0622
- Rep. Garnet Coleman: (512) 463-0524
- Rep. Byron Cook: (512) 463-0730
- Rep. Brandon Creighton: (512) 463-0726
- Rep. Charlie Geren: (512) 463-0610
- Rep. Jim Keffer: (512) 463-0656
- Rep. Lois Kolkhorst: (512) 463-0600
- Rep. Edmund Kuempel: (512) 463-0602
- Rep. Jim McReynolds: (512) 463-0490
- Rep. Allan Ritter: (512) 463-0706
- Rep. Burt Solomons: (512) 463-0478

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The Center for Public Policy Priorities is a nonpartisan, nonprofit policy institute committed to improving public policies to better the economic and social conditions of low- and moderate-income Texans.