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HOUSE SET TO VOTE ON BILL TO SUPPORT FOOD BANK EFFORTS TO FEED THE HUNGRY

HB 1086 would fund grants program to help distribute surplus fresh produce to needy families

On Tuesday, March 20, the House will vote on whether to fund a grants program at the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) to assist food banks in collecting surplus or unmarketable fresh produce offered by Texas farmers for distribution to low-income families across the state. This policy page provides background on this legislation and its importance to private, charitable efforts to feed hungry families in Texas.

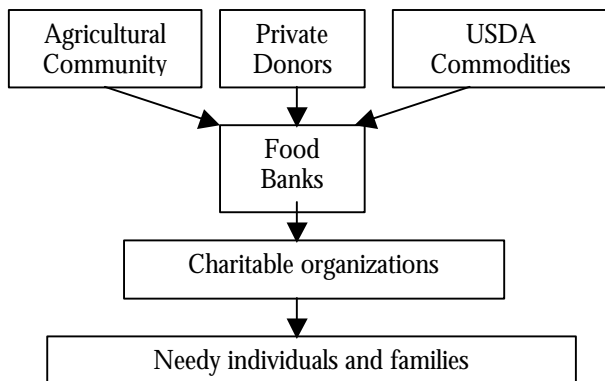
****Call your representative today and ask them to vote for HB 1086 – floor vote scheduled for Tuesday, March 20****

WHAT ARE FOOD BANKS AND HOW DO THEY WORK?

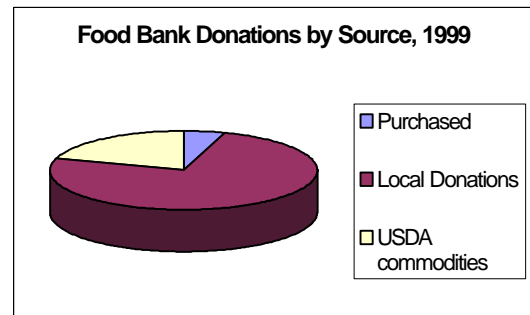
Food banks collect and store food for distribution to charities that feed the hungry. The Texas Association of Second Harvest Food Banks (TASHFB) represents the largest network of food banks in the state. These 19 food banks distribute food to 3,700 charitable agencies that serve all 254 counties. These agencies—soup kitchens, food pantries, senior meals programs, etc.—help feed low-income individuals and families when their resources run out.

In 1999, Texas food banks collected and distributed 125 million pounds of food (valued at \$177 million) to its network of charities. These charities served 33 million hot meals to hungry Texans and provided bags of groceries to 2.5 million households, representing approximately 7.5 million people.

“The Food Chain”



Although food banks receive donated USDA commodities from the federal government, over 75% of their support comes from the private sector, including local businesses, the agricultural community, foundations, and individual donors.



How do food banks get fresh produce to the hungry?

Farmers or processors contact TASHFB or their local food bank when they have produce they cannot sell for a profit. Although food banks receive some private support to collect and distribute surplus produce to their network of charitable agencies, funding is limited and does not always cover the cost of soliciting, harvesting, collecting, and transporting it. In these cases, the produce either has to be ploughed back under the ground or hauled away and disposed of, both of which are costs born by the farmer. Due to these funding limitations, millions of pounds of surplus fresh produce that could feed hungry families go untapped each year.

STATE FUNDING WILL INCREASE THE CAPACITY OF FOOD BANKS TO DISTRIBUTE MORE FRESH PRODUCE

In 1999, Texas food banks distributed over 18 million pounds of fresh produce, collected from the Texas agriculture community. This number represents only a fraction of what would be available if food banks had more resources to access it. HB 1086, by Representative Jim Solis, sets up a grants program at TDA to provide funding for transportation, and harvesting fees for farmers who donate their produce. Senator Robert Duncan, the author of this legislation in the Senate (SB 398), has requested \$500,000 for the biennium to fund this grants program. A similar request has been made by Representative Kino Flores, a member of the House Appropriations Committee. With this funding, it is estimated that roughly 4.5 million additional pounds of produce (costing the state approximately .11/lb) would be distributed to hungry families statewide, with an estimated value of \$6 million.

WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM THE FRESH PRODUCE PROGRAM?

The Texas agricultural community: Food banks serve as a secondary market for unmarketable commodities. The fresh produce program makes donating surplus food easy and beneficial while reducing hauling, disposal, and waste fees and creating potential tax deductions for growers.

Needy families: By offering an emergency food outlet during times of crisis, food banks help individuals to remain independent of government welfare. By distributing fruits and vegetables to these families, food banks also ensure that low-income families maintain a healthy diet.

Food banks: The donation of fresh produce allows food banks to supplement their donations with more nutritious

fresh produce. And, by not having to purchase fresh produce, they use their limited funds to purchase high-protein foods, which are rarely donated.

Local charities: Agencies receive low or no cost food from food banks, which allows them to spend a greater portion of their resources on other clients services such as counseling, job training, etc.

The state of Texas: Everyone benefits when all Texas residents are healthy. Fresh produce serves as a preventive medicine for diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, which reduces state health care costs. Children who do not suffer from hunger and malnutrition are more likely to receive the full benefit of their education, thus saving the state special education costs later in life.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Contact your representative ASAP and ask him or her to vote for HB 1086 when it is introduced on the House floor on Tuesday, March 20. To find out who your representative is, call 1-877-824-7038, or go to the Texas Legislature Online web site at <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/>.

For more information about this legislation, visit our web site (<http://www.cppp.org/>) for the testimony on HB 1086 or SB 398, or call Celia Hagert at (512) 320-0222.

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