



THE POLICY PAGE

An update on state and federal action from

The Center for Public Policy Priorities

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Food & Nutrition Update:

Money allocated for Childless Adult Food Stamp Recipients...

Appropriations for Food & Nutrition Programs to be Determined in September.

Almost a year after the passage of Welfare Reform, members of Congress managed to retain some of the benefits lost during last year's welfare overhaul. On July 31st, members of the House and Senate passed the Budget Reconciliation Bill. President Clinton signed the bill yesterday. The budget bill contains five-year spending and revenue provisions aimed at balancing the budget. With the budget bill complete, Congressional members will adjourn for recess (August 2-September 2) and return in September to conclude appropriations for FY98 food and nutrition programs. Here is a brief look at what has passed and what is pending.

Passed

FY 1998 Budget Reconciliation

Food Stamps. The bill provides \$1.5 billion in a new five year spending for job slots for the childless, adult population who are only eligible for 3 months of benefits in a 36 month period. States are required to spend 80% of these job funds on work training or job slots for this population and meet maintenance of effort requirements to draw down the funds. At this time, it is unclear if the Texas Workforce Commission plans to draw down these funds. A measure to provide an additional 15% waiver for this same population, above the labor surplus waiver, is also included in the bill. States will have the liberty of outlining this waiver. States may implement this new exemption/waiver starting October 1, 1997.

Note: Now is the time to start thinking of possible exemptions the state of Texas can seek and urging DHS to take full advantage of this new provision. Some possible exemptions are: exemptions due to hardship, certain areas of the state, or subgroups of recipients.

However, the state of Texas is moving forward with new plans to integrate eligibility.

Immigrants. Republican leaders agreed to restore SSI benefits to legal immigrants who were receiving benefits last August. Benefits would also be available to legal immigrants living in the U.S. as of August 22, 1996 who become disabled in the future. Approximately 500,000 already disabled immigrants and 125,000 estimated to become disabled in the future will benefit from this provision.

Other. Congress also approved \$3 billion to help move welfare recipients into jobs. This provision also has a maintenance of effort requirement.

Privatization. The final version of the budget bill did not include any provisions regarding privatization.

Supplemental Appropriations Bill Disaster Relief Bill

Signed by President Clinton on June 12, 1997, the Disaster Relief Bill included provisions bringing relief to food and nutrition programs. **WIC** (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) received funding to sustain the program through FY97. The \$76 million WIC appropriation will help maintain the current WIC caseload and is the exact amount requested in the "Hunger Has a Cure" agenda.

The Disaster Relief bill also included a provision to extend **SSI benefits for disabled legal immigrants** until September 30, 1997. However, this provision now has changed due to the passage of the Budget Reconciliation Bill. Also, the bill included a provision giving states the option to continue and pay for **food stamps for legal immigrants**. Those states deciding to continue to provide food benefits to legal immigrants could use the current Food Stamp Program infrastructure to distribute benefits.

Legislation to be Determined After Recess

FY 1998 Agriculture Appropriations

The FY98 Agriculture Appropriations bill was voted out of the House(H.R.2160) and Senate(S.1033) floor on July 24th. Differences between the two versions will go to House/Senate Conference after the August recess. Both the House and Senate version would fund **TEFAP** (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) at \$45 million (discretionary) in administrative support and \$100 million (mandatory) for commodity purchases. Funding for **WIC** is set for more than \$3.9 billion but differs slightly with the Senate bill(S.1033) funding WIC at 3.6 million higher than the House bill(H.R.2160). The House version designates funding for the **NET** (Nutrition Education and Training) Program at \$5 million (only half of what is considered adequate funding) while the Senate version provides no funding. Also, the House funding would move the NET program from USDA's Food and Consumer Service to Economic Research Service.

FY 1998 Labor, Health and Education Appropriation Bill

The House Appropriations Committee marked up this bill(H.R.2264) on July 22nd, zeroing out funding for the **Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFNP)**. Yet, on the Senate side, the appropriations subcommittee and full committee delineated \$4 million for CFNP for FY98(S.1061). CFNP supports state and community-based anti-hunger efforts and its supporters are seeking \$15 million for FY98.

Hunger Has A Cure Act (H.R.1507)

The Hunger Has a Cure Act is part of the new "Hunger Has A Cure" Initiative implemented by Bread for the World. Bread for the World is working with several national and regional leaders to lessen the negative impact of welfare reform, shape public policy, and address the underlying cause of hunger. H.R. 1507 grew out of this effort and has gained strong bipartisan support in the House. The Hunger Has a Cure Act has not yet been introduced in the Senate. The following Texas Representatives are currently co-sponsors of this piece of legislation: Frost(D), Green(D), Hinojosa(D), and Jackson-Lee(D). Contact your Congressional Members and the members listed below and ask them to join the growing roll of Hunger Has A Cure sponsors.

The Act contains the following provisions:

Food Stamps. Provide benefits for needy unemployed adults who are willing to work but unable to find a job; Reduce food stamp cuts to legal immigrants; Increase benefits for families with high housing and utilities costs; Update program rules to allow ownership of a car of reasonable value; and Allow standard deduction to reflect inflation.

WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Woman, Infants and Children). Provide \$76 million fiscal year (FY) 1997 supplemental funds to maintain current WIC caseload of 7.4 million; and Provide \$4 billion for FY 1998 to increase WIC participation to 7.5 million.

TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program). Provide \$45 million in FY 1998 to meet costs of processing, storing and delivering commodities to low-income families.

Other Child Nutrition (To Be Enacted in 1998). Strengthen summer meals programs, school breakfast and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Contact	Message	Phone
Senator Hutchinson (R-TX).	ask her to be the lead Sponsor for Hunger Has A Cure	202/224-5922
Representative Joe Barton (R-TX).	ask him to sponsor Hunger Has A Cure	202/225-2002
U.S. Capitol Switchboard		202/224-3121

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