



# Advocacy Alert

OREGON FOOD BANK  
OREGON HUNGER RELIEF TASK FORCE

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## take five

(actions that take five minutes or less)

### Action:

Ask your state legislators to support the anti-hunger legislative agenda. Call the toll-free number below or log on to [www.oregonfoodbank.org](http://www.oregonfoodbank.org) to send a message. (Click on Take Action - Advocate)

### Message:

Hunger is an income problem. I urge you to support policies that will help families:

- Increase economic stability.
- Improve community food security.
- Expand participation in federal food programs.
- Protect funding for the emergency food network.

## Anti-hunger legislative agenda

On January 10<sup>th</sup>, state legislators convened for the opening of the 2005 legislative session. Once again, Oregon Food Bank (OFB) and Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force (OHRTF) will team up to represent the voice of Oregonians who experience hunger and poverty. The nature of the problem of hunger places it at the center of many public policy debates. The cost of covering a family's basic necessities is outstripping the wages earned by low- and moderate-income families. This stark reality forces families to make difficult decisions on whether to

pay for housing, child care, heating, or food. Below is a summary of some of the major proposals on each of our organization's legislative agenda. Organization acronyms next to each proposal indicate board approval.

**Family Economic Stability:** Until incomes catch up with living expenses, families need support programs aimed at offsetting high living expenses.

**Low-income Renters' Tax Credit:** Create a Low-Income Renters' Assistance program open to all Oregon renters who

have a household income under 100 percent federal poverty and are paying more than 30 percent of their household income for rent. (OHRTF/OFB)

**Expand the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC):** Make the EITC refundable and increase the value to eliminate state taxes for people living below the federal poverty level. (OHRTF)

**Strengthen Rules for Payday Loans:** Establish a minimum loan term of 31 days, cap interest at 15 percent of principal, and require a principal buy down for loan renewals. (OHRTF/OFB) *(continued on page 2)*

## Legislative Yellow Pages

**State Legislative Information**  
1-800-332-2313 (outside Salem)  
(503) 986-1000 (in Salem)  
[www.leg.state.or.us/citizenguide](http://www.leg.state.or.us/citizenguide)

**Federal Legislative Contacts**  
Rep. Wu (District 1)  
(503) 326-2901  
Rep. Walden (District 2)  
(541) 776-4646  
Rep. Blumenauer (District 3)  
(503) 231-2300  
Rep. DeFazio (District 4)  
(541) 465-6732  
Rep. Hooley (District 5)  
(503) 588-9100  
Senator Smith  
(503) 326-3386  
Senator Wyden  
(503) 326-7525

## What your tax dollars do for folks in need

Guest column by Ellen C. Lowe as published in *The Oregonian* on Monday, December 27, 2004

The holidays are traditionally the season of sharing and good will, when we make a point of contributing to charities who serve people in need. It is also a good time to reflect on what Oregonians do for our communities all year long, through our tax dollars. Oregonians have reason to be proud of the good work our tax dollars are doing. One of the most basic forms of charity is feeding the hungry. If you're an

average-income Oregon family of four, you probably spent about \$6.50 a month this year feeding 400,000 hungry Oregonians. That's the portion of your federal tax dollars that went to the Food Stamp program.

Here's another group of Oregonians who need a little help: seniors and people with disabilities who want to stay out of nursing homes but have a hard time with daily chores. If you're that average family of four, you spent about \$4.80 a month -- through your state and federal tax dollars --

paying for home-care workers who assisted 18,000 people in that group. The help those home-care workers provide allows those folks to stay in their own homes with dignity and independence, continuing to contribute to their communities and staying close to their families.

Do you think poor children should be a priority? Well, you've helped more than 9,000 children in poverty prepare for school through the Head Start program. That average family of four spends *(continued on page 2)*

# Proposals for legislative agenda (continued from page 1)

**Increase educational opportunities for low-income families:** Amend current "Parents as Scholars" law to allow for implementation. The program will allow a small number of low-income parents to pursue post-secondary education as an allowable work activity under the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. (OHRTF/OFB)

**Redesign General Assistance (GA):** GA provides a small living stipend to the poorest of the poor, people who are disabled and who have almost no income while they are awaiting

federal disability benefits. Funding for this program was eliminated in the Governor's Recommended Budget. Reinstate funding that will provide a small amount of income and medical coverage for people who will otherwise become homeless. (OHRTF/OFB)

**Community Food Security:** Community food security combats hunger and improves nutrition by building a strong and resilient regional food system.

**Expand WIC/Farmers' Market Coupons:** Increase state funds by

\$49,000 to access several times that amount in federal funds to expand to roadside stands and provide more vouchers to families on the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. (OHRTF/OFB)

**Federal and Emergency Food Programs:** Federal and emergency food programs are an important way to address immediate need while we work to secure long-term solutions to the problem of hunger.

**Expand Summer Food Support:** Support the Oregon Department of

Education policy option package to provide 5 cents in state funds for every summer lunch served by introducing companion legislation. (OHRTF/OFB)

**Protect Funds for Oregon Food Bank Statewide Network:** Maintain and, to the extent possible, increase the contribution of state funds to the Oregon Food Bank Statewide Network. (OHRTF/OFB)

To learn more about these proposals and more importantly, to voice your support to your state legislators, visit Oregon Food Bank's web site, [www.oregonfoodbank.org](http://www.oregonfoodbank.org).



The Advocacy Alert is published jointly by the Oregon Food Bank (OFB) and the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force (OHRTF).

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# Your tax dollars at work (continued from page 1)

about \$2.90 a month on Head Start.

By the way, if those numbers seem low, they reflect the fact that most of our taxes aren't targeted at the poor. The biggest government programs are national defense, public safety (police, fire and such), education and Social Security (which helps keep many seniors out of poverty, true, but it's an insurance program for everybody who plans to live to 65; it doesn't help only the poor).

By contrast, the program that we most easily associate with the poor -- the cash welfare program -- is less than 1 percent of the federal budget; the average family pays \$5.83 per month in taxes for the cash welfare program.

The biggest chunk of money that is spent on the poor is spent on health care and related programs (like that home-care program). If you're that average family, you're spending \$88 a month on nursing home care for poor seniors, health insurance for Oregon families in poverty and so on. (You might think of that nursing home deal as kind of an insurance program, like Social Security - if your parents ever have to go into a nursing home and run out of money, your fellow taxpayers will help. In fact, the government foots the bill for 60 percent of Oregon nursing home residents.)

Oh, what about the poor children in other countries your mother told you about? Foreign aid is less than 1 percent of the fed-

eral budget; it costs that family of four about \$4.65 a month. (And of course much of that is military aid rather than aid for poor children.)

Next year, poor people in Oregon are probably going to get even less help from taxpayers. The governor's proposed budget would take away home care for at least 3,000 seniors and others with disabilities. It also would cut \$10 million from the Head Start program, which means fewer 3- and 4-year-olds in poverty will have a chance to get into that program.

But we will still be helping to feed the hungry, care for the elderly poor and provide a Head Start for thousands of children. Whether we're helping enough is a question that each of us has to answer for ourselves.