



# Advocacy Alert

OREGON FOOD BANK  
OREGON HUNGER RELIEF TASK FORCE

October 2005  
Volume 11 Issue 10



## take five

(actions that take five minutes or less)

### Action:

Tell Congress to delay the budget reconciliation process.

### Message:

- ✓ State and federal agencies are struggling to meet the most basic needs of Hurricane Katrina and Rita survivors.
- ✓ Tell Congressional leaders that these tax and service cuts must not just be delayed - they must be rejected.
- ✓ We cannot pay for Katrina relief through cuts to low-income programs. Tax cuts benefiting the nations wealthiest must be on the table.

Call: 1-202-224-3121

or

Take Action with ease...

[www.oregonfoodbank.org](http://www.oregonfoodbank.org)



ADVOCATE

## 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

## Opening our eyes to poverty

By Angela Martin, Public Policy Advocate

Three weeks after the devastation of Katrina changed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people I headed to Washington, D.C., for an annual conference on hunger and poverty in America. Leaders from hunger-relief agencies across the country gathered to work against cuts to the federal nutrition programs and discuss other policies impacting the lives of people who live in poverty.

While I was there I visited the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial. This open air memorial, tracing the twelve years of FDR's presidency, offers a place for quiet contemplation among the granite walls bearing inscriptions from his four terms in office. As I entered the second outdoor gallery, representing his second term in office, I watched a man and his son approach the statues showing a row of men standing in line before a closed door. The son looked up to his father and asked, "What is that?" His father explained that it was a bread line. Confused the boy asked again, "What is that?" "Well," the father began, "back then there were no jobs and the men had no money so back then, people had to get in

*"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much it is whether we provide enough for those who have little."*

**Franklin D. Roosevelt**

line for food." The father went on to summarize the FDR quote inscribed on the wall above the statues explaining that, "back then one-third of the nation was ill-housed, ill-clad and ill-nourished." I took this as my cue to offer some insight so I leaned in and said, "and isn't it a shame that the story hasn't changed much today?" They both turned a confused gaze my way, revealing that they did not believe a word I was saying. Undeterred by their response, I offered facts to back up my startling revelation, "I'm visiting from Portland, Ore., where the most recent US Census numbers report that 25 percent of children in my county live in poverty. That same Census update reported that the ranks of the poor have grown not just in my community but across the nation."

Unfortunately, I don't know that they were ready to receive this information, especially not from a total stranger. However, their response highlighted for me the long road ahead. In the days after Katrina, the fumbled response of government bureaucracies at the local, state and na-

tional level confirmed what millions of this nation's poor have known for generations – there is a human price to be paid for the systematic disinvestment in the public institutions of our nation. The bewildered response from the father and son reminds me that too many Americans are still unaware of this reality. For them, poverty was something our nation faced back then and we have memorialized that battle with bronze statues we can visit during our summer vacations.

The time is ripe for a renewed conversation about how we expect our government to be there the next time disaster hits. It is also time to expand our understanding of disaster because for the 850,000 Oregonians who ate from an emergency food box last year, disaster came in the form of a pink slip from their employer, or a flat tire on their only transportation to work, or a medical emergency without health insurance.

The generosity of people in every community across the nation is certainly a fact to be celebrated.

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## Opening our eyes

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Based on a recent poll by Zogby, 68% of Americans have contributed to hurricane relief efforts. Here in Portland, Oregon, thousands of businesses and individuals have pitched in to help those in need. We can only hope that the forces that have motivated so many to open their wallets will also work to open our eyes to the disaster that poverty creates in the lives of millions of our neighbors everyday.



### Attention:

The OHRTF office will be relocating as of October 1, 2005. Our street and e-mail addresses will change. The new information is below. Please be sure to update the new information in your contact lists:

Patti Whitney-Wise  
Executive Director  
Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force  
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The Advocacy Alert is published jointly by the Oregon Food Bank (OFB) and the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force (OHRTF).

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## Act to end hunger: Get involved!

The Act to End Hunger was inspired by the Governor's Hunger Summit in 2003. The interest in ending hunger in Oregon brought community leaders together as the catalysts. The momentum generated by the 2003 Hunger Summit was furthered in 2004 with the release of the Act to End Hunger." The document is designed to give Oregonians a guide to help eliminate hunger in Oregon. We also hoped to inspire Oregon's leaders in business, community and government by identifying concrete, achievable actions.

*Act to End Hunger* outlines a menu of forty actions, providing a host of answers to the question, "What can we do to eliminate hunger?"

The plan is organized into four distinct categories: Family Economic Stability, Community Food Security, Federal Food Programs, and Emergency Food Services. Each category contains goals and a list of recommended actions for meeting each goal.

In an effort to help guide immediate efforts, 11 actions were identified as priorities for the first 18 months and published in the Executive Summary.

It is hard to believe but eighteen months have gone by! Progress has been made on nine of the eleven items in the Executive Summary. The Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force (OHRTF) will evaluate progress and select the next

items for the new executive summary this fall. We want your input.

As with the original plan, we will develop recommendations through an open process during October and November. The OHRTF will finalize the list at their November 30 retreat, and the new Executive Summary for the next eighteen months will be published in January 2006.

Please email Patti Whitney-Wise to help in this process: [patti@oregonhunger.org](mailto:patti@oregonhunger.org) or call 503-757-8027. You can view both the Executive Summary and the complete Act to End Hunger at [www.oregonhunger.org](http://www.oregonhunger.org).

## Federal budget update

This year Congress passed a budget resolution that required \$35 billion in spending cuts and \$70 billion in new tax breaks.

State and federal agencies are struggling to meet the most basic needs of Hurricane Katrina and Rita survivors. Congress has had to focus its attention on relief and recovery. In September, the House and Senate Republican leaders announced new target dates for the federal budget reconciliation process. It is now expected sometime during the week of October 17<sup>th</sup>.

The Budget Committees are expected to report the

budget reconciliation bill by October 26th with floor consideration to occur shortly thereafter. The tax portion of budget reconciliation is expected to be considered in November.

Some members of Congress are insisting on moving forward with planned cuts. We are asking Congress to abandon its plans to cut services and pass new tax cuts.

Senators Gordon Smith and Ron Wyden have called for the indefinite postponement of budget cuts to entitlement programs, citing the inappropriateness of making cuts to programs that are needed now more than ever.

Opportunities remain for Congress to abandon cuts altogether. It is possible that Congressional leadership will decide not to follow through with program cuts, although some in Congress are beginning to assert that program cuts are now necessary to offset Katrina spending.

The delay in the budget reconciliation process presents us with a window of opportunity to push for cancellation of the budget reconciliation process altogether and abandon its plans to cut services and pass new tax cuts. See this month's *take five*.