



Advocacy Alert

OREGON FOOD BANK
OREGON HUNGER RELIEF TASK FORCE

August 2006
Volume 12 Issue 7



take five

(actions that take five minutes or less)

Action:

Please contact your federal legislators and let them know you support restoring funding for the Community Food & Nutrition Program. See Legislative Yellow Pages below for telephone numbers to call or *Take Action with ease*.

Message:

- ✓This small \$7 million program is critical as it provides seed money for a range of local and state projects to alleviate hunger across Oregon.
- ✓I understand CFNP was zeroed out, this is not acceptable to me.
- ✓The CFNP is the primary source of federal funding for anti-hunger and advocacy groups.
- ✓Cutting the funding will make it difficult to generate new funding for it in the current budget climate.

Take Action with ease...

www.oregonfoodbank.org



Legislative Yellow Pages

State Legislative Information
1-800-332-2313 (outside Salem)
(503) 986-1000 (in Salem)
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

Reducing prescription drug costs

Governor Kulongoski held a roundtable on prescription issues to announce two major prescription drug savings measures. According to the Governor, Oregon spent \$180 million in general fund on prescriptions in 2006. Reducing prescription costs will be a major component of his 2007-09 budget.

The first roundtable was the release of a report by the Heinz Family Philanthropies. The report called "*The Oregon Blueprint*" provides the Governor and legislature with a roadmap for achieving cost effective purchasing of prescription drugs. Implementation of the recommendations are estimated to generate \$17.1 million in savings the first full fiscal year.

Jeff Lewis, President of the

Heinz Family Philanthropies presented the recommendations. The recommendations include giving the director of DHS sole responsibility for negotiating all state contracts related to prescription drugs; having the Attorney General investigate to ensure accountability of prescription pricing; increasing transparency in pricing; auditing insurance companies with state contracts and implementing a Medicaid Preferred Drug List. "The message for the state is to buy better, buy smarter," said Governor Kulongoski after receiving the report.

As a first step in implementing the recommendations, Governor Kulongoski asked Dr. Bruce Goldberg, Director of DHS, to develop a plan to

coordinate purchasing of prescriptions for all state agencies. The Governor said he will once again seek a preferred drug list for Medicaid during the legislative session.

Recognizing the success of our Oregon Prescription Drug Program (OPDP), the Governor's second announcement was the formation of the Northwest Prescription Drug Consortium. The larger pool will help to increase negotiated savings for both Oregon and Washington residents. In announcing the new consortium, OPDP Program Administrator, Missy Dolan shared that individuals have saved \$560,000 by using OPDP since it began in March 2005.

Joining the Governor were
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Funding for human services moves ahead; but Community Food and Nutrition Program is left out

On July 20, 2006, the full Senate Appropriations Committee brought forth a fiscal year 2007 appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education. In H.R. 5647, the HHS portion of the bill, funding was restored for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) to its current level of \$630 million.

In President Bush's fiscal year 2007 budget the CSBG was proposed for complete elimination and the House of Representatives made a \$200 million cut, which would have reduced CSBG funding to \$430 million.

However, the Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFNP), another important component of the

CSBG, received no funding in the Committee bill. "CFNP was zeroed out," said Ellen Teller of the Food Research and Action Center in Washington, D.C. "This is not good," she added. The House has also failed to provide funding for the CFNP next year and, although the program's authorization remains in place, it will be difficult
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Reducing prescription drug costs

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Sue Krieger and Kathy Karpinnen of Forest Grove. Both women shared their experiences of being uninsured with chronic health conditions and struggling to afford prescription drugs. The Governor was very thankful to hear their stories, stating, "Kathy and Sue, I am just so moved by what has happened to you...people in my position have to understand your situation."

During the prescription roundtable, AARP State

Director, Jerry Cohen, received a text message announcing the measure to reduce prescription costs for Oregonians utilizing Oregon's innovative prescription drug purchasing program has qualified for the November ballot. The room broke into applause. The measure qualified with 83,409 valid signatures- a 71.7% validity rate. Now, voters will have a real opportunity to reduce the high cost of prescription

drugs for all of us. "I am thrilled voters across the state will have the chance to reduce prescription costs for over three-quarters of a million Oregonians," said Senator Bill Morrisette, who along with Jerry Cohen served as chief petitioner for the initiative. "Already, the program has saved \$560,000 in prescription costs for individuals. Removing the age and income barriers will allow more Oregonians to access

their needed medications." The Secretary of State's Office has until August 6 to determine which initiatives will qualify for the ballot. A ballot measure number will be assigned once all of those reviews and determinations have concluded.

If you or your organization would like to get involved in helping the ballot initiative, call *Oregonians for Health Security* at: 503-655-2793.

But CFNP is left out

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to generate new funding for it in the current budget climate.

The CNFP is the primary source of federal funding for anti-hunger and nutrition advocacy groups at the local, state and national level. This

small program provides critical seed money for a range of local and state projects to alleviate hunger and restore millions of Americans to food self-sufficiency.

Under CFNP, funds are authorized to 1) coordinate existing private and public food assistance resources whenever such coordination is determined to be

inadequate; 2) assist low-income communities in identifying potential sponsors of child nutrition programs and initiating new programs in underserved or unserved areas; and 3) develop innovative approaches at the state and local levels to meet the nutritional needs of low-income people.

Oregon Food Bank and the Oregon Hunger Relief

Task Force support restoring funding for CFNP and have written to the Oregon delegations to express our concerns.

Please take a moment to tell our Oregon delegates that funding for CSBG must be restored. See this month's "take five".

Foodlinks America by California Emergency Foodlink, Weinberg & Vauthier Consulting



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

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What's up with Congress?

Very little time remains in the 109th Congress if legislators adhere to their preferred timetable. Both the House and Senate aim to adjourn the current session on October 6, 2006. This leaves them very little time to make decisions about funding for next year and other important governmental matters. Between July 21 and October 6, only 24 days are scheduled for the House of Representatives to meet and vote on government business. The

Senate has added a few extra days, but also will have less than a month of work time before the planned adjournment. The traditional month-long August recess – also referred to as the "Summer District Work Period" – begins July 31 in the House and August 7 in the Senate, and continues until September 5, when Congress reconvenes after Labor Day.

Meanwhile, no budget resolution for 2007 has

been enacted and none of the regular appropriations bills for fiscal year 2007 have passed. There is great concern that Congress is headed for a huge "catchall" omnibus bill this fall. Efforts to extend or renew the Farm Bill, which contains funding for the Food Stamp Program, commodity programs, and other nutrition assistance, is also pending, and likely will be carried over into the new, 110th Congress, which convenes in January 2007.