



# Advocacy Alert

OREGON FOOD BANK  
OREGON HUNGER RELIEF TASK FORCE

July 2005  
Volume 11 Issue 7



## take five

(actions that take five minutes or less)

### Action:

Contact your state legislator, House Speaker Minnis and Senate President Courtney.

### Message:

**Senate:** Support low-income workers, pass **HB 2046** without amendments.

**House:** Before going home, take action on three important anti-hunger bills.

**SB 289** and **SB 467** will help provide more food for poor children.

**SB 545** will help protect hard working Oregonians who turn to payday loans for emergency needs.

**Both:** Investing in families who experience hunger and poverty is a high priority for me. I urge you to make it a priority and help move the anti-hunger bills to the Governor's desk.

## 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

## The debate surrounding TANF reauthorization

Frequent readers of the *Advocacy Alert* are all too familiar with the debate surrounding TANF Reauthorization. For the uninitiated, TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) is a cash assistance program for the poorest families. In 1996, under the direction of President Clinton, Congress passed welfare reform legislation, establishing the current TANF program. Congress has been working to pass new legislation since 2002 when the law expired.

The House and Senate have been unable to reach a compromise on several major provisions including

the level of child care funding, work requirements, definitions of work activities and the number of recipients the state must engage in work-related activities. There is also disagreement over a House proposal to permanently alter the program rules for other low-income programs like food stamps. Under the House proposal, a number of states would be able to change eligibility rules for food stamps – the nation's most successful nutrition program.

Instead of debating ways to limit access to federal food programs, Congress should consider the impact TANF

has on children's hunger and health and put their collective heads together to design a program aimed at supporting our nation's most vulnerable children. A recent *Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program (C-SNAP)* report makes a strong case for rethinking some of the rigid proposals currently under consideration.

Since 1998, *C-SNAP* has been collecting data through a national network of pediatricians and child health researchers. Their research informs reports highlighting how public policies and legislative

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## Hunger relief bills need action before the session ends

As we go to print with this month's issue, hunger relief advocates are concerned about the fate of several bills aimed at improving the lives of people who experience hunger and poverty in our state. As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, not one anti-hunger bill has made it to the Governor's desk.

While there is no definitive date set for the last day of session, House Speaker Minnis has indicated that the House will adjourn very soon. Given the amount of work that remains to be done on the state budget, it is likely legislators will be in Salem for a few more weeks. However, with the primary

focus on budget, many policy bills may be left by the wayside.

### Stalled Bills

Two bills are aimed at providing more food for poor children by investing state dollars in two successful federal food programs:

**Senate Bill 289** would help more women and children access fresh produce with farmers market coupons issued through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children or WIC. The bill passed the Senate in late June and has been assigned to the House Budget Committee.

**Senate Bill 467** would help schools pay for the lunch program during the summer. \$150,000 in state general-fund dollars would be used to offer a supplement of 5 cents per meal to encourage more organizations to participate, giving more children access to lunch during the summer months. SB 467 passed the Senate in early June and is waiting for a hearing in the House Budget Committee.

Two bills are aimed at increasing the financial stability of working families:

**House Bill 2046** would make the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

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## C-SNAP report – a strong case for TANF reauthorization *(continued from page 1)*

decisions impact children’s food security and health. A report issued in March 2005 confirms the findings from previous studies showing that reducing or terminating welfare benefits increases the risk of food insecurity in families with small children. Research findings include these facts: families whose TANF benefits are reduced or terminated due to sanctions are 60% more likely to be food insecure than families whose benefits have not been decreased, and families whose TANF benefits have been reduced for administrative reasons (e.g., changes in work hours, marital status or living arrangements) are 50% more likely to be food insecure than families whose

benefits have not decreased. Children who come from food insecure households are more likely to suffer poor health, deficits in cognitive development, behavioral and emotional problems and increased risk of hospitalization. These complications carry a heavy toll for the children, their families and their communities. Most importantly, we have the knowledge and power to prevent this damage from occurring – assuming Congress chooses to craft legislation aimed at first protecting our children.

The report ends with recommendations to policy makers, including

- assess families’ barriers to program compliance before imposing penalties;
- broaden the definition of work requirements to include rehabilitation or other activities that address the barriers standing in the way of compliance;
- significantly increase funding for licensed child care services; and
- include a measure of children’s health and well-being in all evaluations of welfare reform.

We would add a few items to this list, including

- broaden the definition of work requirements to include post-secondary education;
- reject proposals to alter

the federal Food Stamp Program through block grants or superwaivers; and

- move TANF legislation as a stand alone bill, outside of the reconciliation process.

Senators Smith and Wyden both serve on the Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over TANF. Contact them to share your concerns and support for welfare reform policies aimed at protecting the health and well-being of vulnerable children.

For more information or a copy of the report, visit: <http://dcc2.bumc.bu.edu/csnapublic/reports.htm>.

**Take Action with ease...**  
[www.oregonfoodbank.org](http://www.oregonfoodbank.org)  
*(click on)*   
 **ADVOCATE**

## Anti-hunger bills stalled in legislature *(continued from page 1)*

refundable and increase the value to eliminate state taxes for workers earning wages below the federal poverty line. EITC is the nation’s most successful anti-poverty program. It rewards work by helping the lowest paid workers keep more of their hard earned income. HB 2046 passed the House in early May and is waiting for a floor vote in the Senate.

**Senate Bill 545** would establish modest protections for payday loan consumers by placing a cap on the interest and fees that can be charged for these short-term, high cost loans and providing consumers with the right to make payments. SB 545 passed the Senate in late May and is waiting for a hearing in the House State and Federal Affairs Committee. In addition to working on

these bills, anti-hunger advocates continue to voice our concern that the Department of Human Services (DHS) budget is under-investing in the health and safety of Oregon’s most vulnerable residents. DHS administers the health and human needs programs for the state, including TANF, the Food Stamp Program, and the Oregon Health Plan. The DHS general fund budget is second only to the state’s investment in public education. However, many advocates are concerned that the priorities outlined in the two-year budget that just passed the Senate, fall short of the need that clearly exists. Funding has been significantly cut for successful programs such as Job Retention Support Services (a TANF-funded program

that helps low-income parents stay employed by assisting with emergency work-related expenses such as transportation or child care); General Assistance (GA), a program offering a small living stipend to people who are disabled and have no income while they are waiting for federal SSI or SSDI payments; and Emergency Assistance (EA) which has been completely cut.

Before our legislators go home, they need to hear from you one more time. Take a moment to pick up the phone and let your senator and representative know that investing in families who experience hunger and poverty is a priority you value.

See this month’s *Take Five*.

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

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