



# Advocacy Alert

OREGON FOOD BANK  
OREGON HUNGER RELIEF TASK FORCE

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## take five

(actions that take five minutes or less)

### Action:

Call your legislator's, tell them:

- ✓Be a leader supporting the increase of revenue. Budgets are about values and priorities.
- ✓Support adequate funding for critical services for vital safety net programs.

Call the Legislative Line at 1-800-332-2313.

### Message:

Gain the political will to support tax reform in Oregon.

- ✓Support fair and progressive tax reform.
- ✓Support equitable tax policy for all Oregonians.

Take Action with ease...

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



ADVOCATE

**REGISTER TO VOTE—**

*Encourage others to register to vote.*



## 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

## Community well-being + program services = TAXES

With increasing political and economic pressures facing the state of Oregon revenue system, the ability of existing tax systems to adequately finance the operation of state government and other important safety net programs has been the subject of considerable debate recently. In the coming legislative session, legislators will need to find revenue while being challenged by anti-tax advocates to set a spending cap and cut taxes.

For too many Oregonians, the ongoing debate of finding revenue to fund important services is obvious, but to some there has been a surprising disconnect between providing important public services and raising the

revenue to pay for those services. The political rhetoric criticizing taxes and government spending masks a simple truth: services for important programs cannot continue without providing proper and adequate funding.

The most ardent anti-tax advocate would agree that public health must be maintained and infrastructure like roads and bridges must be constructed or repaired. Also, the majority of citizens would agree that state and local police officers and other essential public services such as K-12 education and higher education must be adequately funded.

Just as Oregonians will continue to demand public services, state and local

governments will need to find the revenue to pay for these programs in order for them to continue to exist. The question is not whether Oregon will raise the necessary money, but from whom the funds will be collected. State and local governments generally impose taxes on consumption, income and property. Some taxes appear to fall more heavily on the poor. In addition, some taxes are perceived to harm business and economic development. Determining who will bear the burden of paying for government functions, infrastructure and public services is an ongoing political debate.

The citizens of Oregon, as well as our political leaders *(continued on page 2)*

## Food stamps boost the economy

As the economy sputters along, more and more Oregonians find themselves turning to the federal food stamp program for assistance in meeting their family food needs. But, we often forget that the Food Stamp Program (FSP) not only provides food for low-income households, but the program supports families moving to fulltime employment and delivers economic benefits to urban and rural communities across Oregon.

The USDA calculates potential economic activity based on its analysis that a food stamp dollar generates an additional \$1.84 in economic activity in the community where it is spent. The food stamp program is the first line of defense against hunger in Oregon, creating an economic boost that ripples throughout the economy when the food stamps benefits are spent in the community.

In its latest effort to promote the program and enroll more eligible people in the food stamp program, the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has developed materials that make "The Business Case for Increasing Food Stamps Participation." To learn more about the findings go to: <http://www.fns.gov/fsp/outreach/business-case.htm>.



## Lessons from the field—when five years is not enough

The State of Oregon, Department of Human Services (DHS) will face key policy choices as they begin to implement the next steps in changes to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs serving the poorest of the poor families living in Oregon.

After a lengthy and contentious reauthorization process at the federal level, Congress enacted changes to the TANF program in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) that substantially increases the proportion of TANF recipients required to participate in work-related activities for a specified number of hours each week coupled with a five-year life-time time limit. As state welfare offices examine their options for achieving higher work participation rates, they will be faced with many choices and only limited evidence of what works best to help hard-to-

employ recipients achieve success in the labor market. While this situation presents a formidable challenge for DHS, it also offers a new opportunity to develop proactive approaches for helping recipients with a wide range of needs to improve their circumstances and the lives of their children.

Since TANF was reauthorized, concern for families reaching the time limits imposed under welfare reform has led many states to develop strategies for addressing the needs of this hard-to-serve population.

In the *Mathematica* study “*Lessons from the Field: When Five Years Is Not Enough: Identifying and Addressing the Needs of Families Nearing the TANF Time Limit in Ramsey County, Minnesota*” an integrated intervention project was developed to reduce the number of families that would reach that limit without employment or other sources of economic support. The

focus on assessment and intensive case management revealed not only what problems they faced, but also how these problems affected their ability to participate in traditional welfare employment programs, and sustain full-time unsubsidized employment.

The Ramsey County study found that despite the extreme difficulties adhering to program rules and regulations and personal barriers for the families, with the right services and income supports, most recipients could eventually work or could be transferred to other income support programs, like Social Security (SSI or SSDI). The study could easily be a mirror for what needs to happen for the families in the state of Oregon TANF program.

Oregon must weigh alternative strategies for meeting higher TANF work participation rates, taking into account the special circumstances of each of

the TANF recipients who face numerous, serious personal and family challenges. By identifying hard-to-employ recipients early on, developing and using program activities that accommodate the recipients' limitations, creating developmental work opportunities such as transitional employment programs or highly structured work experience programs with extensive supervision, considering alternative income support programs when work is not feasible, and building more effective partnerships with programs for individuals with disabilities, families could meet the new federal requirements.

For more information on *Mathematica's* publication by Pavetti and Jacqueline Kauff, it is available at: [www.mathematicampr.com/publications/redirect\\_pubsdb.asp?strSite=pdfs/timelimitramsey.pdf](http://www.mathematicampr.com/publications/redirect_pubsdb.asp?strSite=pdfs/timelimitramsey.pdf).

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

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## Community well-being + services

(continued from page 1)

face a difficult task during the next legislative session. We must raise adequate revenue to operate important public services and community programs. Legislators must overcome heavy political opposition to taxes in general. In setting tax policy, they must weigh various concerns from constituents, business, special interests, and a myriad of advocacy

groups. While state taxation has never been more important, formulating state tax policy has never been more difficult.

Oregon Food Bank and the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force supports tax reform at the state and federal level that is fair, progressive and ensures an adequate source of funding for critical resources for all

low-income safety net programs. There will be more discussions on tax reform in Oregon. It will be important for all Oregonians to weigh in with their legislators to help in making Oregon's tax policy decisions fair, adequate and equitable for all across diverse socioeconomic lines.

See this month's 'take five'.