



ChangeChampions

Advocacy and action for hunger relief



Welcome to the summer edition of Change Champions - keeping you informed on current public policy and advocacy issues that affect our clients, our partners, and all those we serve. To learn how to be involved in our advocacy efforts please contact Valerie Hawthorne, PhD at vhawthorne@houstonfoodbank.org or call 713-547-8611

Federal

On July 15, 2016 Congress will adjourn for the summer and return to session September 6, 2016. This year has been a tumultuous one for our congressional members. Issues surrounding Supreme Court nominees and gun control have stalled the path for other matters of legislation to move through Congress. However, there are still issues important to our clients that we are keeping a close watch on.

SNAP The House Budget Committee has included a proposal to block grant and cut SNAP, again. Two years ago they attacked SNAP funding and were mildly successful, however, the House Majority is back at it again. Their proposal would cut SNAP funding by 20%, block grant SNAP to the states, and other harmful changes. The block grant proposal would give a fixed amount of money to the states (termed the State Flexibility Fund). This method eliminates States' ability to expand and contract program funds in times of economic crisis or natural disasters. It also asks States to handle the administrative burden of SNAP which is not currently feasible, and would require additional funds.

Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act Though this important reauthorization should have been passed by 2015, it continues to wait. The House Committee on Education and The Workforce marked up their proposed bill and much to the disappointment of child hunger advocates it rolled back years of progress made by previous reauthorizations. To read more about our opposition to [H.R. 5003 Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act of 2016](#) please click the link.

State

Last session, Food Banks across Texas teamed up with Feeding Texas to ask that the Surplus Agriculture Grant in the Texas Department of Agriculture's budget be increased in order to source more produce for evidence-based health interventions in low-income Texas communities. In the last session, we asked for \$20M and received \$6M. Feeding Texas food banks will again work together in the upcoming 2017 session of the Texas Legislature for a larger amount of state funds to acquire produce. We will request \$22M for the Surplus Agriculture Grant. The Houston Food Bank, due to its size, ability, and numerous produce-fueled programs receives a large amount of this money (19%) from the state. The Houston Food Bank service area has six out of ten legislative budget board members and we are currently setting meetings with their offices to help them see why this increase is necessary to improve the health and well-being of all Texans, and especially Houstonians.

Local

In the past few months, local hunger fighting organizations including Houston Food Bank, Target Hunger, and Interfaith Ministries have met with Precinct 1 County Commissioner Gene Locke, to form a focus group and taskforce to combat food insecurity in Precinct 1. We thank Commissioner Locke for his steadfast commitment to his constituents through active service. We welcome and look forward to working with the new administration as we all continue to help Precinct 1.

Surplus Agriculture Grant Program 2015-2016
Out of \$1.9 Million Awarded

