



2009 Public Policy Agenda

Over 5 million Californians are hungry or are at risk of hunger and need help to access healthy food. Food banks help by providing emergency food and by partnering with state and federal nutrition programs. The California Association of Food Banks represents 44 food banks working together to build a well-nourished California (*list on back*). Together, we can significantly reduce hunger and malnutrition in California. Our 2009 priorities are:

1. Support a State Investment in Emergency Food

Food banks across California have seen a sudden and unprecedented increase in requests, beyond anything that has been seen in a generation. Statewide, most food banks are reporting a 30-50% increase in people in need, but in some individual programs, increased requests for assistance were 100% or greater over the previous year. California does not provide annual funding for food banks, although food banks have been on the front lines of responding to emergency needs for food during this economic crisis. Several of our peer states have made significant investments in their food bank networks, even in very difficult fiscal climates. Moreover, several states have responded to the recent economic crisis by providing an additional investment for emergency food.

California can better serve people in need of food by:

- Creating and funding a state food purchase program that shores up the State's emergency food network.
- Assuring that the \$12.4 million of additional funding in the federal economic recovery act for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is utilized to quickly and efficiently provide nutritious food to State's EFAP providers, and that the food banks have the transportation and storage resources they need to accommodate the increase in food.

2. Modernize and Simplify the Food Stamp Program

The food stamp program is the nation's number one nutrition and anti-hunger program. It provides 100% federally-funded benefits of approximately \$100 per month to over 2.5 million Californians - most of them children. Nonetheless, California has the lowest participation rate of all the states, because of red tape that makes it hard for people to enroll and to stay enrolled.

Support AB 1057 (Beall) – The Food Stamp Modernization Act

Assemblymember Beall's bill would remove red tape and bring additional federal money to the state's struggling economy by implementing simplified reporting and modernizing the way that county offices capture the fingerprints of food stamp applicants.

Support SB 718 (Leno) – Eliminate Finger Imaging for "Food Stamp Only" Recipients

The costly finger imaging system does not increase program integrity, according to a 2003 State audit, yet it can discourage participation and hamper program modernization. Removing the finger imaging requirement would allow counties to reduce state administration costs while preserving eligibility without reducing program integrity.

3. Support Food Stamp Benefits for People in Transition

Many Californians, like families losing their home or those affected by drug addiction, have experienced hardships that pre-dated our state's current economic crisis, but are now exacerbated by it. California should support struggling families in transition by extending benefits that help make nutritious food more available and affordable.

Support AB 643 (Skinner) – Food Stamp Mobility

Assemblymember Skinner's bill would allow food stamp recipients who move to a new county to continue receiving benefits without the burden of having to reapply for food stamps at their new county of residence. This importance of this change is highlighted by the many people who

Support AB 1198 (Swanson) – Transitional Support

This bill would reinstate Food Stamp benefits for people who have served their time for a prior drug-related felony conviction, provided they participate in a drug treatment program or certify that drug use has ceased.

4. State Budget: Protect Populations Most Vulnerable to Hunger

As the state considers measures to address further shortfalls, protect from further harm the working families and seniors served by food banks. California will have to make more tough choices regarding the state budget this summer, but programs for those most in danger of hunger absolutely should not be cut.

Protect the California Food Assistance Program

The elimination of the \$30 million California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) would cut off an estimated 23,000 immigrants in California from food aid and force them to seek assistance from an already-stretched network of food banks.

Protect SSI COLAs and Benefit Levels

Hunger among seniors receiving SSI - many of whom live alone and are not allowed to receive food stamps - is a rising concern. Food banks are often these seniors' only option when their benefits are cut. The most recent 2.3% SSI grant cuts will surely exacerbate this growing problem and any further cuts to SSI will only serve to intensify hunger among this vulnerable population.

5. Invest in School Meals

In the past two years, the state reimbursement for school meals served to low-income kids (currently just under 22 cents) ran out during the last months of the school year. This left school districts without an important source of funding and put the quality of food served to California's children at risk. Expectations are that this trend of rising enrollments in school meals will only continue and that the state reimbursement for school meals served to low-income students will run out even sooner.

Support AB 95 (Torlakson) - Emergency Funding for School Meals

This legislation would ensure that the state meal reimbursement does not run out by calling for a budget augmentation of \$19.5 million.

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CAFB Members (alphabetical by county)

Alameda County Community Food Bank
Interfaith Council of Amador
Community Action Agency of Butte County
HRC Foodbank of Calaveras County
Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano
Community Assistance Network
Food Bank of El Dorado County
Community Food Bank
Food for People, Inc.
Imperial Valley Food Bank
Inyo-Mono Advocates for Community Action
Community Action Partnership of Kern County Food Bank
Kings Community Action Organization
Lake County Community Action Agency
Los Angeles Regional Foodbank
Westside Food Bank
Madera County Food Bank
Marin Community Food Bank
Mendocino Food and Nutrition Program
Ukiah Community Food Bank
Merced County Food Bank
Food Bank for Monterey County

Napa Valley Food Bank
Food Bank of Nevada County
Community Action Partnership of Orange County
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
Community Resources Council, Inc.
Food In Need of Distribution (FIND)
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara & San Mateo
California Emergency Foodlink
Feeding America San Diego
San Diego Food Bank
San Francisco Food Bank
Emergency Food Bank of Greater Stockton
Second Harvest Food Bank of San Joaquin & Stanislaus
Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo
Foodbank of Santa Barbara County
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz & San Benito
Shasta Senior Nutrition Programs
Redwood Empire Food Bank
FoodLink for Tulare County
Amador-Tuolumne CAA
Food Share, Inc.
Food Bank of Yolo County

The mission of California Association of Food Banks is to provide a unified voice among food banks to maximize their ability to build a well nourished California. To accomplish this mission, the membership of 44 food banks focuses on increasing the visibility of hunger and its solutions, assisting Californians in accessing food assistance and nutrition



programs, distributing fresh produce through the Farm to Family program and influencing public policy.