



# Colorado Food Bank Association Digest

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### **National Perspective—President Cuts Vital Food Program from 2009 Budget**

Nearly 500,000 Low Income Seniors and Families Would Lose Monthly Meal Boxes - President Bush released a Fiscal Year 2009 budget proposal this week, that eliminates funding for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) - a critical nutrition program benefiting nearly half a million low-income seniors and women with young children monthly in 32 states, the District of Columbia and two Indian Tribal Organization areas.

The President's budget also would eliminate more than 300,000 working families with children from eligibility for the Food Stamp Program. Despite increasing costs of food and a deteriorating economy, the President's proposal fails to make much needed improvements in the Food Stamp Program and the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), which are contained in the pending House and Senate Farm Bills. These programs are crucial resources for many low-income Americans in need of food.

Some 93 percent of the Americans participating in CSFP are vulnerable seniors who rely on the food boxes that the CSFP provides to get them through each month. Eliminating CSFP puts these seniors at significant risk of health and related problems associated with aging and poor diets. It also will place additional burdens on food banks and emergency feeding organizations that already are suffering from stagnant funding and more than a 75 percent decline in USDA bonus commodity donations over the last four years.

High health care costs, spiraling housing costs and special dietary needs associated with aging present critical problems for the seniors living on low-and fixed incomes. Senior participation in food stamps is low and the average monthly benefit is only \$65. The food boxes provided through CSFP offer the equivalent of an additional \$50 worth of foods to help seniors secure a nutritious diet. This is more than twice the value of food that needy seniors could purchase with their own limited resources on a monthly basis. And, many of the seniors receiving CSFP food boxes are homebound or lack the resources necessary to access food through federal nutrition programs or prepare a meal due to lack of transportation, functional limitations, or health problems.

### **State Perspective—Food Insecurity in Colorado**

Children, seniors and working families in Colorado are at a higher risk of hunger this year. The U.S. Department of Agriculture released a sobering report in late 2007 showing that Colorado is among 14 states where food insecurity has significantly grown. More than 12 percent of households in our state faced empty plates in the period 2003 to 2006 compared with 9.7 percent during the previous three years. The national food insecurity rate is 11 percent. Food security is defined by the USDA as "access by all people at all times to enough nutritious food for an active, healthy life." Food insecurity happens when because of financial hardship people do not have access to enough food.

"Many of us are facing a tighter budget with gas prices, groceries and heating bills going up," says Care and Share Food Bank President and CEO Nicholas Saccaro. "For the 570,000 people in Colorado who struggle at the edge of hunger, having to put another \$10 worth of gas in the tank and pay another \$20 on their heating bill means fewer meals on the table that week." While more people are relying on the state's food banks, food from key USDA commodity programs is dwindling.

"We don't want to tell the pantries, soup kitchens and shelters that rely on us as the hub for hunger relief that we just don't have the food they need because of cuts to commodity supplies, so we're asking private citizens and businesses to step up to the plate," said Saccaro. "We're also asking our elected leaders to keep a strong nutrition title to give the much needed support to TEFAP and food stamps in the Farm Bill being debated in Congress right now."

#### The member food banks serving 64 counties in Colorado

- Care and Share, Inc., Colorado Springs
- Community Food Share, Longmont
- Food Bank for Larimer County, Fort Collins
- Food Bank of the Rockies, Denver
- Weld Food Bank, Greeley



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