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## **August 2010 Legislative News: The latest in legislative news concerning hunger and nutrition issues**

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### *Medicaid and Jobs Relief Bill Cuts Food Stamp Funding*

On August 5, the Senate passed the “FMAP” bill (H.R. 1586) which includes aid to states and funding for teachers' salaries and FMAP (Medicaid). On August 10, the House of Representatives passed the bill and it was signed into law by President Obama the same day. The \$26.1 billion bill aims to prevent further job losses and encourage economic growth. The bill provides \$10 billion for education jobs and \$16.1 billion to extend for six months the increased federal Medicaid matching rate provided to states through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Without the extension the increased Medicaid matching rate would have expired on December 31, 2010. According to the Economic Policy Institute, the Medicaid funds will save 150,000 jobs (more than half will be in the private sector), and the education funds will save 161,000 educators' jobs.

Under current Congressional PAYGO rules, any new legislation must be deficit neutral—meaning any new program cannot add to the country's deficit. As a result, any new legislation must have its costs balanced out by either program cuts or by raising revenue prior to becoming law. Unfortunately, H.R. 1586 is being paid for in part by cutting short a boost in SNAP (food stamp) benefits provided in ARRA funding. The increased benefits provided in ARRA were supposed to continue until the automatic annual inflation adjustments in regular SNAP benefits increased their value to the ARRA benefit levels. Estimated to occur in 2014, due to lower inflation levels benefits were not expected to catch up until 2018. As a way to generate \$11.9 billion to pay for H.R. 1586, these increased SNAP benefit levels will now end in April of 2014. According to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), a family of four can expect its benefits to drop by about \$59 a month at that time. Anti-hunger advocates are urged to reach out to their members of Congress to voice their opposition to cutting SNAP benefits to pay for any other legislative priorities—regardless of the merit of the proposals. For more information, visit the Coalition on Human Needs at [www.chn.org](http://www.chn.org).

### *Senate Passes Child Nutrition Reauthorization Bill*

On August 5, the Senate passed the “Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (S. 3307). The bill provides many opportunities to improve program access and increase participation for hungry children. The bill simplifies the application process for free meals for students by using direct certification, increases reimbursement rates for the

National School Lunch Program and insures greater food quality in schools by allowing the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to establish nutrition standards for all food sold during the school day. In addition, the bill simplifies administration of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

Since the bill’s passage in committee in early May, the bill has been unable to come to a vote without finding a means to pay for the \$4.5 billion in improvements under Congress’ PAYGO rules. As a way to secure votes for passage, the Senate agreed to cut an additional \$2.2 billion in SNAP benefits in future years to help pay for the legislation. This is in addition to the \$11.9 billion cut passed in the “FMAP” bill- reducing benefits earlier from April 2014 now to November 2013. As the House of Representatives have yet to pass their version of Child Nutrition Reauthorization this cut has yet to become law-unlike the \$11.9 billion FMAP cut. Anti-hunger advocates are urging the House of Representatives to pass their bill quickly and to identify more appropriate offsets for funding to prevent further cuts to SNAP benefits.

*Take Action Opportunities to Oppose Reducing SNAP Benefits:*

As a way to call attention to the recent legislation cutting SNAP benefits, anti-hunger advocates can take action in several ways to voice your opposition to Congress against these SNAP cuts. Suggestions from the Food Research and Action Center include:

1. Sign on Letter: National, State and local organizations can sign on to a letter to be sent to Congress showing their opposition to the cuts. Join more than 1,500 other organizations by signing on. To view the letter visit:  
[http://org2.democracynaction.org/o/5118/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=3830](http://org2.democracynaction.org/o/5118/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=3830)
2. Contact your Members of Congress and the White House: Let them know how you feel about the cuts! A sample message:

**“We urge the House to fund and pass its child nutrition bill (H.R. 5504) when Congress returns in September. It's critical that Congress enact a robust reauthorization bill that increases children's access to programs and improves nutrition without cutting SNAP/Food Stamps benefits.”**

For toll-free calls, call 1-866-277-7617 and get connected first to the Capitol Switchboard and then routed to the White House. (Thanks to Voices for America's Children for use of its toll-free number).

Member of Congress	Counties Covered
Congressman Michael Arcuri	Broome, Cayuga, Chenango, Cortland, Herkimer, Oneida, Ontario, Otsego, Seneca, Tioga, Tompkins
Congressman Dan Maffei	Cayuga, Monroe, Onondaga, Wayne
Congressman Bill Owens	Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Oswego,, St. Lawrence
Senator Charles Schumer	All of New York State
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand	All of New York State

For other suggestions, visit FRAC's website at [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)

### *New Unemployment Numbers*

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the official unemployment rate remained at 9.5 percent in July 2010. However when factoring people working part-time for economic reasons or too discouraged to look for work are included, the rate of unemployment and underemployment increases to 16.5 percent. To view the report visit: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf>

### *Another Record Month for SNAP/Food Stamps Participation*

A record 40,801,392 people received SNAP/Food Stamps in May 2010, an increase of 6.4 million people compared with May 2009. It is also an increase of 370,971 individuals from April 2010. Currently one in eight people are receiving food stamp benefits. For more information, visit: <http://frac.org/reports-and-resources/snapfood-stamp-program-participation-data-2009/>

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If you have any questions or would like to submit a story for next month, please email [bslater@foodbankcny.org](mailto:bslater@foodbankcny.org)

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