



# Hunger Action Network OF NEW YORK STATE

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## Hunger Alert – November 2007

1. Calls Needed to US Senators on Farm Bill
2. Thanksgiving Action Against Hunger, Monday Nov. 19
3. Order Your Hunger Action 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary T-Shirt
4. Health Care Rally – Syracuse, Tues. Nov. 13
5. Health Care Forum – Albany, Sunday Nov. 18
6. Holiday Appeal

### November ACTION item



#### NOVEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup> PHONE-IN

#### *Urge Governor Spitzer to Raise the Welfare Basic Grant after 17 years*

Lawmakers in NY have refused to raise welfare benefits since 1990. Benefits have declined in value to less than 50% of the federal poverty level. By the end of next week, the Governor and the Division of Budget will have made the key decisions about next year's budget, even though the details won't be made public until January. The only way welfare benefits can be raised is if the Governor includes it in his budget proposals.

We have set **Friday, Nov. 9 for a statewide phone-in to Paul Frances (518 474-2300)**, the Director of the Division of Budget (but call whenever you can)

**Message: We need Gov. Spitzer to raise the basic welfare grant to reflect inflation since it was last increased since 1990. Welfare benefits are way too low.**

Welfare benefits (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Safety Net) have two main components: the shelter allowance and the basic grant. The basic grant is the same for each county (e.g., \$291 a month for a family of 3) and has not been raised since 1990. There was a slight raise two years ago in the shelter allowance for children as part of a 20-year-old lawsuit where 5 times the State's courts have ruled that such payments are illegally low; the lawsuit continues.

Also ask any state legislators and organizations you know to contact Governor Spitzer.

## **1. Calls Needed to US Senators on Farm Bill**

The Senate will vote on the Farm bill within the next week. Senators reached a deal to put an additional \$1 billion in new five-year funding to further improve the Food Stamp Program's minimum benefit and asset rules and increase funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). However, progress in reforming the commodity price support system and for increasing funding for fruit and vegetables still faces an uphill battle.

The Lugar-Lautenberg amendment would broaden the agricultural safety net by making a free revenue insurance program available to all farmers. This would save billions of dollars that would be used to invest in nutrition programs, specialty crop programs, critical conservation programs, and the McGovern-Dole international school feeding program.

The Grassley-Dorgan amendment would establish a hard cap for commodity payments at \$250,000 per household, helping ensure payments are targeted where they are needed. The amendment would also make sure that payments flow to working farmers rather than their landlords. The money saved from capping payments to the largest producers and landowners would be redirected into nutrition and conservation programs.

**MESSAGE FOR SENATORS CLINTON AND SCHUMER:** *Please support amendments on the Senate floor to provide additional funding for Food Stamps and reform the commodity price support system. We want to further increase the Food Stamp minimum benefit of \$10, as well as the Lugar-Lautenberg and Grassley-Dorgan amendments.* (Toll-free hotline: (800) 826-9624)

## **2. Thanksgiving Action Against Hunger – Monday Nov. 19**

On Monday, November 19, 2007 please join groups across the state to encourage solutions to this devastating problem that exists in the wealthiest country in the world. The theme for this year's Thanksgiving Action is Increase Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) funding and Raise the Welfare Grant. We are urging elected officials to increase funding for HPNAP by \$7 million to meet the rising demand for emergency food. Not only does the poverty rate remain very high in many communities, food prices have increased dramatically over the last year, putting increased demands on emergency food programs.

For your copy of our Thanksgiving Action Packet, go to: <http://hungeractionnys.org/thankspack07.pdf> or call 212 741-8192, ext 6#

## **3. Order Your Hunger Action 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary T-Shirt**

Hunger Action has printed up a special 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary T-shirt (100% cotton, union made). T-shirts cost \$12 plus \$4 for shipping. Let us know if you want large, x-large or medium. Call 212 741-8192, ext 0# or email us at [info@hungeractionnys.org](mailto:info@hungeractionnys.org).

## **4. Health Care Rally – Syracuse, Tues. Nov. 13**

Join the fight for quality, affordable health care for ALL New Yorkers. Tuesday, November 13 - 9:00 a.m. at Onondaga Community College, 4585 W. Seneca Turnpike, Syracuse. The New York State Departments of Health and Insurance will conduct the fourth in a series of public hearings to solicit input on how New York can provide quality, affordable health care to all. Let's show our support for health care reform by coming to the rally prior to the start of the hearing and making our voices heard!

Bring your signs, your t-shirts and buttons, and bring your enthusiasm! Let's show New York's elected officials that we want real health care reform and we want it now. Sponsored by: Tompkins County Health Care Taskforce and T.C. Workers' Center

### **5. Health Care Forum in Albany on Sunday Nov. 18**

The Capital District Alliance for Universal Healthcare, Inc. (CDAUH) will present "Universal Healthcare Proposals: Fears and Facts," on Sunday, November 18, from 2 - 4:30 p.m. at Emerson Community Hall, First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany, 405 Washington Avenue (between Lake and Robin) Albany, New York. Parking is available in U ALBANY lot at corner of Washington and Robin. At the Forum, legislative representatives, physicians, nurses, and health policy analysts will discuss the latest universal healthcare proposals

### **6. Winter Appeal**

2007 has been an exciting year for the Hunger Action Network as we observed our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a successful event in NYC on World Food Day, October 16<sup>th</sup>. We honored long-time anti-hunger leaders Kathy Goldman, Bill Ayers and Betsy Gotbaum for their work with an event at the 1199 union hall.

2008 will provide even more challenges as we organize for a Medicare for All type health care system for New York that will provide quality health care for all New Yorkers while cutting costs for consumers, taxpayers and employers. Lawmakers early this year agreed to fund a series of studies of universal health care that Hunger Action has championed. We believe the key is to eliminate the enormous waste, administrative costs and bureaucracy created by our present system of private health insurance.

We hope you will **contribute to a special 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Fund** we have established to enable us to expand our work on two key issues: **quality health care** for all New Yorkers, and to follow up on our successful campaign to re-establish the **NYS Food Policy Council**.

*(And for a contribution of \$50 or more, we will send you a FREE 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary Hunger Action t-shirt.)*

**To make a donation, go to: <http://hungeractionnys.org/endlunger.htm> or you can mail your donation and check made out to "Hunger Action Network NYS", 260 W. 36 Street, Suite 504, New York, NY 10018**