



Food For All

1272 DELAWARE AVENUE
BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14209

"Let not the needy be forgotten."

(716) 882-7705 • FAX: (716) 882-3797

June/July 2002

House Passes Damaging TANF Bill Senate Version Under Debate

In 1996's welfare reform debate, Congress abolished AFDC—Aid to Families with Dependent Children—and created TANF, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Federal TANF funding expires September 30, 2002, and Congress must reauthorize TANF by that date. On May 16, the House of Representatives passed legislation (H.R.4737) to reauthorize the TANF program. The Senate is preparing its version of the legislation, which is expected to reach the Senate floor in late June.

The House version of TANF proved disappointing in several ways. It includes stiff work requirements that largely fail to consider the realities of weakened economic conditions and parents' difficulty in finding jobs that will feed their families. The bill allows only four months of education to count toward work requirements in any two-year period, failing to consider that training and education programs that lead to good jobs take longer. One provision allows states to request block grants to operate food stamps. This will effectively strip away the protections built into the Food Stamp Program that ensure a basic safety net for all who are eligible.

A Senate version of the TANF bill will be debated by the Finance Committee before coming to the full Senate late in June. The religious community and other advocates are urging Senators to focus on the following points:

- Set poverty reduction rather than caseload reduction as a goal of TANF;
- Maintain the current 30-hour work week requirement;
- Increase access to education and job training by allowing such activities to count as full-time work for a minimum of 24 months;
- Increase funding each year to keep up with inflation;
- Increase child care funding by \$20 billion over five years;
- Ease time limits—allow TANF recipients who are in compliance with program rules to receive benefits without their time clock ticking and recognize disability and mental illness as specific hardships some TANF recipients face in gaining self-sufficiency;
- Restore TANF and Medicaid benefits to legal immigrants.

"The repoliticized welfare debate . . . ignores the purpose of welfare policy, which should be to help the poorest families earn enough to lift more children above the poverty line. The further tragedy is that it diverts attention from the broader issue: the millions of Americans whose earnings from work, while not technically placing them in poverty, leave them struggling daily to make ends meet."

—Peter Edelman, Professor of Law, Georgetown University Law Center

(Resigned his post as an assistant secretary at the Department of Health and Human Services in protest against the 1996 welfare law)

Urgent!! Action Needed Now

Please phone or fax a message to Senators Charles Schumer and Hillary Rodham Clinton. (Mail delivery to Congress is very slow because of anti-terrorism precautions.) You may also send an e-mail message by visiting their websites.

Senator Charles Schumer:

Phone: 202-224-6542

Fax: 202-224-0420

<http://schumer.senate.gov>

Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton:

Phone: 202-224-4451

Fax: 202-228-0282

<http://clinton.senate.gov>

Urge them to strengthen the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program by including provisions of the Working From Poverty to Promise Act (H.R.4210) in the final bill passed by the Senate. (Key points are listed on the left-hand side of this page.)

Also urge them to contact their colleagues on the Finance Committee and ask them to support these provisions in TANF legislation.

Congregations Invited to Participate in Anti-Hunger Activities

One of Food For All's goals for 2002 is to involve more congregations in anti-hunger advocacy activities. Working together we can accomplish much more than working alone. Opportunities for participation include:

- **Designating a contact person** who (1) receives the Food For All newsletter, (2) publicizes information about the annual Faith and Hunger Conference and other activities, and (3) distributes educational material about the problem of hunger and specific actions to be taken.
- **Appointing a representative to serve on the Food For All Public Policy Committee.** The committee meets monthly (except December, July, and August) to plan the annual Spring Faith & Hunger Conference and a Fall event, meet with legislators about hunger issues, maintain the HOTLINE Telephone Tree, provide suggestions for the Food For All newsletter, and other activities as needed throughout the year.
- **Organizing a letter-writing campaign** so that members of the congregation have an opportunity to write a letter to a legislator about a specific hunger-related bill.
- **Joining the HOTLINE Telephone Tree**—participants receive a phone call a maximum of 4-6 times per year, asking them to call a specific legislator about a hunger-related bill. The HOTLINE is activated when there is not enough time to write a letter; i.e., when a vote on important legislation is imminent.
- **Financially supporting the work of Food For All** to ensure the continuation of the important work of advocacy, education, and outreach on behalf of people living in poverty in Western New York and beyond.

In addition to the newsletter and educational opportunities, Food For All provides resources for interested congregations upon request, including visits to Social Concerns and other interested committees, "Minute For Mission" presentations, etc. To indicate your congregation's interest and commitment to ending hunger, please complete the form below and return.

COUNT US IN!! My congregation wants to make a difference by joining efforts with *FOOD FOR ALL*— We will:

<input type="checkbox"/> Appoint a representative to serve on the Public Policy Committee	<input type="checkbox"/> Join the HOTLINE Telephone Tree
<input type="checkbox"/> Organize a Letter Writing Campaign	<input type="checkbox"/> Financially support the work of Food For All. Our contribution of \$_____ is enclosed.
<input type="checkbox"/> We would like additional information. Please call.	

Congregation _____	Contact Person _____
Address _____	Address _____
_____ Zip _____	_____ Zip _____
Phone _____	Phone _____

Please return to: Food For All, 1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209-2496



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