



CALIFORNIA HUNGER ACTION COALITION  
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## 2006 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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### STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 2006

1. **A fair budget for California's most vulnerable!**
2. **Bring more federal dollars to California by increasing food stamp participation!**
3. **Help kids learn more than hunger at school!**
4. **Build partnerships with farmers to provide healthy food to people in need!**

#### *CALIFORNIA'S BUDGET*

##### **Background -**

It has been a recent trend set by the Governor's budget to attempt to solve California's economic tribulations by trying to balance the budget on the backs of the state's most vulnerable populations. The Governor's 2006-07 budget delays passing through a federally funded cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) for SSI/SSP grants which should be received by seniors and Californians with disabilities, and cuts cost-of-living allowances for children and families receiving CalWorks, child care and county support services. As we all know, any cuts to the income of people we serve will affect their ability to purchase and acquire nutritious food. Also, low-wage workers have seen their buying power diminish as California's cost of living has gone up while their wages have not kept up. It is time to increase the state minimum wage, and ensure that workers are not left behind again.

##### **State Legislative Priority -**

#### **1. A Fair Budget for California's most vulnerable!**

CHAC will advocate for preserving funding from state for nutrition programs and other programs that affect those at risk of hunger by:

- Supporting proposed increases to the state minimum wage that ensure minimum wage will rise automatically with inflation and higher costs of living.
- Supporting the passing of COLAs
- Preserving funding for nutrition, health care, and other social service programs

*For more information contact Melissa Ortiz-Gray, California/Nevada Community Action Partnership, 916.443.1721, or Nick Urban, San Diego Hunger Coalition, 619.813.3490*

#### *FOOD STAMPS*

##### **Background -**

The federally funded Food Stamp Program is the nation's first line of defense against hunger. Food Stamps help low-income families afford nutritious food. Food Stamps bring over \$2 billion federal dollars into our state's economy every year, which is spent in local grocery stores. Every dollar in food stamps generates \$1.84 in the economy. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, however, 2 million eligible Californians are not utilizing the program and the state is missing out on an influx of as much as \$2 billion in additional federal funds.

##### **State Legislative Priority -**

#### **2. Bring more federal Food Stamp dollars into California!**

CHAC will support and the following legislation that will improve access to the food stamp program:

- **AB 2205 3 *Connections to Healthy Eating*** (Evans). This bill will make it easier for families to access benefits and connect health and nutrition programs by making recipients of MediCAL categorically eligible for food stamps which will automatically enroll children into free meals at school.

- AB 2384 **Healthy Purchase Pilot Program** (Leno). This bill will directly improve healthy eating in low-income communities. Food stamp recipients will receive bonus value when purchasing fruits and vegetables and incentives will be provided to neighborhood merchants for stocking produce.
- AB 3029 **Food Stamp Simplification Act** (Laird). This bill will move California to a 6-month reporting system for food stamps and CalWORKS, eliminate office visits at recertification, and establish a food stamp simplification demonstration project that would eliminate federal red tape.

*For more information contact George Manalo-LeClair, California Food Policy Advocates, 415. 777.4422*

## **CHILD NUTRITION**

### **Background – School Breakfast**

Unfortunately, for many California children, school meals are sometimes the only opportunity for children to eat in the day. To make matters worse, over 2.5 million low-income children in California are missing out on breakfasts at school. Nearly 75 percent of the children who are eligible for free or reduced-price breakfasts are not participating in the program making it difficult for many of them to start their school day ready to learn.

### **State Legislative Priority -**

#### **3. Help kids learn more than hunger at school!**

- AB 1916 **Access to Healthy School Meals** (Garcia). This bill would require schools with “Severe Need” to offer the School Breakfast Program. “Severe Need” schools serve more than 40% of their students free or reduced price meals.

*For more information contact George Manalo-LeClair, California Food Policy Advocates, 415. 777.4422*

## **FARMERS AND HEALTHY FOOD**

### **Background**

California farmers often have market-surplus fruits, vegetables, and other healthy products. At the same time, California consumers value healthy food when they seek help at food banks. Food banks can help both farmers and families by gathering, transporting, and distributing this California-grown food efficiently.

### **State Legislative Priority**

#### **4. Build Partnerships with farmers to provide healthy food to people in need!**

- **Healthy Food Banks.** Will provide consistent and diverse supply of high quality produce to food banks and the families they serve across the state by designating \$1 million in state general funds for the California Association of Food Banks Farm to Family program.

*For more information contact Sharon Eghigian, California Association of Food Banks, 916.321.4435*

### **About CHAC -**

The California Hunger Action Coalition (CHAC) is a broad-based membership organization of emergency food providers, consumers, and anti-hunger advocates. United in the belief that access to adequate, nutritious and safe food is a fundamental human right, the coalition advocates for freedom from food insecurity and hunger for all Californians.

Many families struggle to put food on the table, in California, over 5 million people are hungry or live in fear of going hungry. Children and adults who fall victim to hunger, suffer from poor physical and emotional health and face increased difficulties in school and the workplace. However having hungry people in our community affects all of us, not just those struggling to make ends meet. Hunger has an impact on the education system, our healthcare costs, the crime rate, and the overall health of our community. Helping families meet their nutritional needs is not only the best way to ensure that all Californians can participate in the economy, the political system and society, but is also a moral obligation of the state and its lawmakers.