



Hunger Action Network OF NEW YORK STATE

275 State Street, 4th Floor
Albany, NY 12210
(518) 434-7371 • Fax (518) 434-7390

260 West 36th Street, Suite 504
New York, NY 10018
(212) 741-8192 • Fax (212) 741-7236

www.hungeractionnys.org
info@hungeractionnys.org

Hunger Alert – December 2004

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1. Minimum Wage Vote Likely on Dec. 6 – Calls to Bruno Still needed

The New York State Senate will be back in session at 3 PM on Monday December 6. While it is expected that the Senate will finally vote to override the Governor's veto of the \$7.15 an hour minimum wage hike, phone calls to Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno urging him to take action would help ensure success. (518) 455-3191

2. Jan. 12th Health care forum in Albany

As part of the campaign for universal health care, the Hunger Action Network and others will sponsor a forum on health care in Albany on Wed. Jan. 12th. (snow date: Jan. 19th). The location is Emmanuel Baptist Church, 275 State St. (1/2 block west of the Capitol). The time is tentatively from noon to 4. Assemblymember Richard Gottfried is expected to address the forum. As. Gottfried is presently drafting legislation, at our request, for a Legislative Commission on Universal Health care.

The forum will consist of a series of panels on key health care issues: strategies for obtaining universal health care in New York State; an overview of key health care issues in the NYS legislature in 2005, including an overview of Health Care Reform Act; prescription drugs; and Medicaid; an overview of ways to providing universal health care, including single payer health care; and, next steps. For more information or to register, please contact Mark Dunlea at (518) 434-7371, ext 1# or email Dunleamark@aol.com. For information about Hunger Action's work on health care, see www.hungeractionnys.org/health.htm

3. Jan. 4th People's State of the State Rally

Hunger Action Network's annual People's State of the State rally will take place on Tuesday, January 4 at 11:45 AM at the State Street entrance to the capitol. The event is held the day before the Governor's formal state of the state address and provides an overview of the status of hunger and poverty in New York State. Key issues will include health care, job creation, and revenue options (e.g., closing corporate tax loopholes).

4. Faith and Hunger Network conferences

The Faith and Hunger Network has regional conferences scheduled for: Albany, March 12th; Wappinger Falls, March 13; Buffalo, March 19th; Rochester April 2nd. To RSVP, email dunleamark@aol.com

5. Record Demand, Fewer Resources at NYC Feeding Programs"

The number of people going hungry and the number of working poor in New York City have risen since last year, according to the report "Empty Plates, Empty Pantries" by the New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCAH). The city's kitchens and pantries fed an estimated 9 percent more people in 2004 than in 2003, even though state budget cuts have forced a record 48 agencies to shut down entirely. Of the agencies that were able to stay in business, limited resources forced more than half (53%) to ration their food by either turning away hungry New Yorkers, reducing portion size, and/or cutting hours of operation. "Parents are working hard and playing by the rules – working 40, 50, and sometimes even 60 hours every week – but their children still face hunger," said NYCCAH executive director Joel Berg. Berg called for the federal and state governments to raise the minimum wage, to expand the number of workers covered by the City living wage law, for city government to remove barriers of access to the Food Stamp Program, and ensure more children take advantage of the universal school breakfast program.

<http://www.nyccah.org/media/SurveyPressRelease2004.doc>

Download the report "Empty Plates, Empty Pantries":

<http://www.nyccah.org/media/full%20report%20text04.pdf>

6. Democratic Senators Urge Bush to Oppose Federal Block Granting of Medicaid

Senators Clinton and Schumer have signed on to a letter opposing the possible federal block grant of Medicaid. The Bush administration may seek to cap the amount of federal dollars it spends on Medicaid as the costs for long term health care continue to rise.

“We are writing to express our opposition to any Medicaid reform proposal that seeks to impose a cap on federal Medicaid spending in any form or eliminates the fundamental guarantee to Medicaid coverage for our nation’s most vulnerable citizens, including low-income children, parents, pregnant women, people with disabilities, and senior citizens. Since 1965, the federal government has helped states pay for the basic health care and long-term services low-income American need. We are unwilling to allow the federal government to walk away from Medicaid’s over 50 million beneficiaries, the providers that serve them, and the urban and rural communities in which they live.”

7. Congress to Approve \$35 Billion for Food Stamps, \$12 Billion for Child Nutrition Programs

(Food Research and Action Center, NY Times) Congressional lawmakers approved a conference report on annual spending for an array of federal programs, including the food stamp and child nutrition programs. The fiscal year 2005 Omnibus Conference Report funds the Food Stamp Program at \$35.155 billion (an increase of nearly \$1.5 billion) , the child nutrition programs at \$11.8 billion, and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) at \$5.277 billion. All discretionary programs are subject to a .83% across-the-board reduction. A final vote on the omnibus spending bill is expected to occur on December 6th. The nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) received its largest budget ever, \$5.2 billion, up from \$4.6 billion in the last fiscal year. Experts said this should be sufficient to serve the eight million families that are expected to apply for aid. The Low-Income Housing Energy Assistance Program was allocated an increase of more than 15 percent, to \$2.2 billion this year from \$1.9 billion last year. However, the increase in the program, which helps poor people meet their winter home-heating costs, lags far behind increases in fuel prices.

8. 36.6. Million Americans in Hungry, Food Insecure Households in 2003

A new USDA report surveys shows another rise in the number of hungry and food insecure Americans. The total number of people living in food insecure households in this country – with or without hunger – went up to 36.3 million in 2003. This number included 23 million adults (10.8 percent of all adults) and 13.3 million children (18.2 percent of all children.) This number compared to 34.9 million in 2002, 33.6 million 2001, 33.2 million in 2000, and 31 million in 1999. 11.2 percent of US households (12.6 million households) experienced either food insecurity or hunger in 2003. 9.6 million of these individuals lived in households that experienced outright hunger. Black (22.1 percent) and Hispanic (22.3percent) households experienced food insecurity at double the national average. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr42/>

9. After Welfare Reform, Many Workers Still Need Help

Many former welfare recipients remain poor after welfare reform, according to the latest "Poverty Research Insights" newsletter. The current issue of the newsletter reviews several studies on the impact of welfare reform on former recipients' well-being. Among the findings is that some women who leave welfare for work lose some or all of their public benefits, including Food Stamps and Medicaid. A synthesis of studies found that about a quarter or more recent welfare recipients experience food hardships, including problems having enough food at some point after leaving TANF. Similar percentages have trouble paying rent or utilities. Additionally, welfare leavers might incur work-related costs such as child care and transportation. Also of concern is the small but growing proportion of welfare leavers who are neither working nor receiving welfare. <http://www.npc.umich.edu/publications/newsletter/fall04/index.shtml>

10. New York: City Council Blasts Mayor for Poor Food Stamp Services

City Council officials charged the Mayor Bloomberg's administration with not doing enough to ensure that hungry New Yorkers get the food stamps to which they are entitled. Nearly 2 million New Yorkers are eligible for food stamps, but only about half the number get them - a loss of as much as \$1.5 billion in services a year, according to the City Council. Council investigators, in their visits to 36 food stamps offices, found problems such as inordinately long lines, a lack of written information and, in some cases, no food stamp applications at all. Councilmember Eric Gioia (D-Queens) recommended allowing hungry New Yorkers to submit Internet applications for food stamps and requiring the centers to keep longer hours. <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/local/story/254747p-218161c.html>

11. Growing a Healthy New York: Innovative Food Projects Manual

Hunger Action and SENSES have developed a manual titled "Growing a Healthy NY: Innovative Food Projects that End Hunger and Strengthen Communities." This manual features programs that promote economic development, provide job training to youth while increasing the amount of fresh food available in communities, increase participation in federal nutrition programs, and unite people with local farmers. The manual details 30 different programs from across the state. Growing a Healthy NY provides many great ideas about projects that can be duplicated in your own community and it also connects you to information resources to get you started. Please contact Sheila in Albany or Susannah in NYC to receive a free copy of the manual, which will be available soon.

12. Do your holiday shopping on-line and up to 15% benefits Hunger Action Network!

GreaterGood.com, Inc. makes it free and easy to support good causes through everyday Internet use. Internet users can shop at over 100 leading online merchants – including Barnes&Noble.com, Dellhomesystems, Gateway, PETsMART.com, Office Deport, Brookstone, priceline, ebay, Lands' End, Dell, Office Max, and more -- and up to 15% of each purchase automatically goes to Hunger Action Network at no extra cost to you. Click this link to be taken to Hunger Action's shopping page--and THANKS for your support!

<http://www.greatergood.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/GreaterGood.woa/wa/shoppingVillage?svid=hannys>