



Getting to the Root of the Problem GRASSROOTS

The Newsletter of the Hunger Action Network of New York State June 2008

Faces of Hunger Action Network

Just Food began in 1994 as an effort of NYC and Northeast food-system leaders to promote a holistic approach to food, hunger and agriculture issues. Just Food links and pursues economic, environmental, and social justice through food systems.

Just Food envisions a strong regional food system — incorporating a diversity of rural farms and a robust urban farming component — that preserves ecosystems, reduces pollution, promotes social justice, provides education about the environment, and invigorates rural and urban economies.

Hunger Action has partnered with Just Food on our two Community Supported
continued on p. 10



Healthy School Acts Stalls

One of the key initiatives pushed last year by former Governor Eliot Spitzer was to improve nutrition and wellness programs in schools. Despite strong support for the concept by legislative leaders, the legislation still has not passed more than a year later.

The bill expanded upon two initiatives that Hunger Action had passed more than 15 years ago. In 1993, we were able to expand school breakfast participation to any school offering the school lunch program that was either an elementary school or a low-income middle or high school. Previously, we helped pass legislation to restrict the sale of soda and candy in school until after lunch. Unfortunately, many of the same arguments we heard all those years ago are still being raised, including from the NYS School Board Association.

This year Gov. Spitzer included the proposal as part of the state budget but it was dropped by lawmakers. In addition, school meal reimbursement from the

state was cut by 2% as part of the overall cut passed at the last moment.

The proposal would require the State Education Department (SED), the Department of Health (DOH), and the Department of Agriculture and Markets to establish nutritional and dietary standards for foods and beverages sold, served or offered in elementary and secondary schools. In addition, school districts would be required to establish a school breakfast program in middle schools and high schools that participate in the Federal School Lunch Program, and to develop local school wellness policies that would ensure community involvement in creating healthier schools.

This bill would increase access to and affordability of healthy school meals by increasing the State subsidy on reduced priced meals, effectively making these meals free to eligible students. It would further restrict access to junk food in schools. Finally, this bill would increase the State subsidy on all meals effective October 1, 2009.

Both the Senate and Assembly have made good additional reform proposals while opposing part of the Governor's

continued on p. 11

In This Issue of Grassroots...

Legislative News	3
Single Payer Health Rally	4
CSAs and local Food	6
Farm Bill Half a Loaf	7
Hamilton Hill Food Processing	8
Food Stamps Rural	9
Child Hunger Poughkeepsie	10
On-Line Food Stamps	11

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Notes from the Executive Director..

Dear Anti-Hunger Advocates:

In a just society, cries of condemnation would rain down upon the heads of our state lawmakers who, for the 18th year in a row, failed to raise the welfare basic grant and lift up the poorest of the poor.

But such condemnation would do little good for those who are denied the basic necessities of life, those who are sentenced not only to suffer but are denied dignity in their struggle to provide a warm, loving home for their family. Too many of us continue to blame the poor for being poor.

And such condemnations would be little heard by the princes of our Empire State who complain that the riches they receive for their part time services are inadequate for their needs.

This is one of those situations where words are inadequate. They fail to fully describe the moral failure of our state leaders, including that of our new Governor who acceded to the demand to keep open ghost prisons and juvenile detention centers while failing to insist that funds must be provided to help the poor as well.

Words are inadequate to describe the reality of poverty for so many New Yorkers. Throughout the world, it is the poorest who work hardest and yet receive the least reward. The path to a good life which seems a birthright to so many of us is so often barred to the poor, with so many barriers placed in their way, barriers that most of us seem unable to acknowledge.

How many times must our poor children and their families hear, “no, not this year, maybe next, we have other things we must do first, times our tough, be patient”?

It was not just the Governor who failed to stand up for the poor at the Capitol when the spoils were being divided. The poor do not lack for legislators who can eloquently state sympathy for their plight. What they lack are legislators who will stand up in the halls of power and proclaim that no, this injustice will not continue, we will not leave here until we do what is right.

Former New York Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt once remarked, “The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

For the 18th year in a row, our state lawmakers failed that test.

As a State Senator, Governor Paterson supported an array of progressive issues - including raising the welfare grant. He became Governor under a difficult situation. We hope that in the coming months he will be able to reconnect with the sense of justice that inspired many of us in the past, rather than allowing the limitations of our political system to prevail.

Mark



Grassroots is published four times a year by the Hunger Action Network of New York State.

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Legislative News

As we go to print, the state legislative session is winding down, with the last day scheduled for June 23.

In addition to the Healthy Schools Act, there are a number of issues that Hunger Action continues to work on.

Recent changes by the Bush administration to the federal welfare-to-work rules for welfare participants actually provide an opportunity for NY to expand access to education. Welfare participants are required to be engaged in work activities for 25 to 35 hours a week as a condition of eligibility. Welfare participants are allowed to attend college for one year as part of an education workplan. The new federal rules would now allow this to include attendance at a four year college. In addition, for each hour of class time one hour of study time can count as work.

Assemblymember Keith Wright, chair of the Social Services Committee, has introduced legislation (A11297) that would implement the changes above. In addition, he would make clear that if a welfare participant wants to engage in education activities such as basic literacy, English as a Second Language, or GED, that local districts should allow this unless they could show that it was inappropriate for the individual.

Senator Carl Krueger, the Chair of the Senate Social Services Committee (even though he is a Democrat), has agreed to introduce legislation to repeal the Standard of Need requirement for welfare that causes households to lose their Earned Income Disregard before they escape poverty. EID is how much earnings a welfare participant can keep from work. While complicated (like many welfare rules are), the rule used to be above the initial \$90, every dollar of work income would reduce benefits by a dol-

lar. Gov. Pataki agreed with Hunger Action that the EID should be increased to provide a greater work incentive. He promised that individuals should be able to work their way out of poverty before they would be cut off from welfare.

However, since the Standard of Need is based on benefit levels which have not been increased in 18 years, participants now are several thousand dollars below the poverty line when they are cut off due to their work income.

The state Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance has proposed legislation on wage reporting for former welfare participants. They want income information for individuals who have left welfare for work to monitor how successful they are in increasing their earnings. It could also be helpful in helping to increase access to transitional benefits. While advocates generally support this approach, they want to make sure that the privacy rights of the individuals are protected just like any other worker in NY and that this info not be used for other purposes (e.g., recoupment).

Hunger Action is also supporting efforts to strengthen state oversight of rate hike requests by health insurance companies. S2740/A7485 would go back to the old system of public hearings and prior rate approvals of increases of more than 5%. In NYS, HMO profits increased by 93 percent between 2001 and 2005, generating industry-wide profits of more than \$6 billion while enrollment fell by 14%. It would also increase by 10% the amount of premiums collected by private health insurance companies that must go to pay for health services. Presently, the so-called "medical loss ratio" is set at 75 cents for each dollar of premiums for small group policies and 80 cents for individual policies. (In comparison, the medical loss ratio for Medicare is 95%).

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Billionaires for Bruno

Single Payer Health Care for All

Single payer universal health care advocates rallied on May 6th at the State Capitol in support of action at both the national and state level.

Representatives of unions, nurses, doctors, seniors, consumer and faith groups urged the state legislature to pass a resolution urging Congress to pass HR 676, known as Medicare for All. As. Felix Ortiz sponsors the Assembly resolution. HR 676 has 90 cosponsors, including NY Congressional representatives Engel, Hinchey, Maloney, McNulty, Nader, Owens, Rangel, Serrano, Towns, Weiner and Velazquez. The resolution is expected to pass the Assembly shortly.

The groups are also urging the state to adopt a single payer system as soon as possible. Single payer legislation (A7354 Gottfried / S3107 Schneiderman) is pending in both the Assembly and Senate. A majority of Assembly members (85) are co-sponsors of the single payer bill. The bill was approved by the Health Committee on a largely party line vote and is now in the Assembly Ways and Means Committee.

Single Payer is defined as financing health care expenditures for the entire population through a single source, presumably the government, with funds collected through progressive taxation of citizens and businesses

Speakers included Rabbi Donald Cashman, B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation of Albany; Priscilla Bassett, Pres. Sullivan County Senior Legislative Action Committee; Deborah Elliott, MBA, RN, Deputy Executive Officer of the NYS Nurses Association; Mike Keenan, President, Troy Area Labor Council; Matt Funicello, owner of Rock Hill Bakehouse; Rebecca Elgie of the Tompkins Health Care Task Force;

Cheryl Gelder-Kogan of Capital District Alliance for Universal Health Care (CDAUH); Mary Wojtyk, student at Albany Medical College, Patti Young, a nurse and a concerned health care consumer and musician Ruth Pelham. The rally was sponsored by CDAUH, New Yorkers for Single Payer Universal Health Care and The Hunger Action Network of New York State

“The cost and coverage of health insurance has become problematic for many working Americans and a major stumbling block in settling union contract negotiations. HR 676 would save billions of dollars annually by eliminating high overhead and profits of the private health insurance industry and HMOs. The transition to single-payer national health care would apply these savings to expanded and improved coverage for all. That is why the Capital District Area Labor Federation unanimously endorsed HR676, and the National AFL-CIO is supporting a universal health care system based upon the successful Medicare program for seniors,” stated Mike Keenan, President, Troy Area Labor Council.

Last year, the State Legislature last year appropriated funds for the state to study how it could most cost-effectively provide health care to all New Yorkers. The legislature required that one of the systems to be studied be a single payer system. Most doctors now support a single payer system as do most health care advocacy groups. Advocates are concerned however that the organization hired by the state to do the studies, Urban Institute, has repeatedly spoken out against single payer health care. Every other state that has done the study process so far has concluded that a single payer system would do the best job of providing quality health care to all resi-

dents while controlling costs and maximizing freedom of choice for consumers.

The groups are particularly critical of the role of private health insurance in the A m e r i c a n

health care system. As much as a third of every health care dollar going through private health insurance goes to pay for their overhead, profits, marketing costs and excessive CEO salaries. Doctors on average have to hire 2.5 staff people just to deal with the conflicting paperwork, rules and bureaucracy of private health insurance. No other industrial country allows private health insurance to play a dominant role in the health care system. The groups oppose mandates for consumers to purchase private health insurance such as the Massachusetts plan.

“NY nurses pick up the pieces of our broken healthcare system every day. We see uninsured New Yorkers who rely on the emergency room as their main source of health care, as well as those who delay necessary treatment until they are so sick they must be hospitalized. The sad truth is that today’s for-profit, private healthcare insurers have failed, and a universal, single-payer healthcare system is the only true solution.,” said Deborah Elliott of the NYS Nurses.

A recent national survey shows a solid majority of doctors, almost 60 percent, supporting government legislation to establish national health insurance (NHI) — a 10 percent increase in support since



Advocates Rally at Capitol

2002. (32% oppose it, 9% are neutral) The survey of 2,193 doctors was done by Indiana University.

Matt Funicello, owner of Rock Hill Bakehouse in Moreau, NY said, "Access to health care is a necessity, not a luxury and we, as a country, are failing miserably at providing an affordable option for the American worker who simply cannot afford to pay the exorbitant amounts charged by the HMO's. We are already spending \$7100 per person on health care (twice what other industrialized nations pay), yet we somehow manage to leave more than 40 million people without coverage and another 70 million "underinsured".

"Its time for us all to do the math. We already pay out far more than enough in premiums and subsidies and taxes to fully fund adequate coverage for every American right now! It is simply being denied to us by the powers that be and the corporate interests that get them re-elected. I can only ask that those on the Hill stop worrying about their campaign coffers for a minute and do what's right for America. From doctors to workers to teachers to unions to business groups everywhere, single payer health care is a rational answer to the health care crisis," he added.

"As I travel across the state I hear that people don't want to lose what they have that they want CHOICE, however, the choice they want is not a choice of many different insurance plans which is what they are being offered but the freedom to choose Who will deliver their health care or what facility best fits their particular need. A Single payer plan which allows access to any doctor or facility will provide us with more choice than we currently have and WE will be

making the decision not the insurance co," added Rebecca Elgie of the Tompkins Co. Health Care Task Force.

Among the hundreds of groups in NY supporting HR 676 include the Physicians for a National Health Program, New York State Nurses Association, NYS Academy of Family Physicians, Healthcare Now, Tompkins County Health Care Task Force, Hunger Action Network of NYS, Healthcare Work Group (Otsego, Delaware & Chenango Counties). Presbyterian Church USA. United Auto Workers, Albany Central Federation of Labor, AFSMCE District Council 37, Professional Staff Congress-CUNY, CWA Local 1180, United University Professions (Local 2190 AFT); Latinos for National Health Insurance and League of Women Voters of NYS.

"The US spends more than twice as much on health care as the average of other developed nations, all of which boast universal coverage. Yet close to 50 million Americans have no health insurance whatsoever, and most others are underinsured, in the sense that they lack adequate coverage for all contingencies (e.g., long-term care and prescription drug costs). Why is the U. S. so different? The short answer is that we alone treat health care as a commodity distributed according to the ability to pay, rather than as a social service to be distributed according to medical need," said Mark Dunlea of Hunger Action.



While the United States has very skilled health providers, our health care system performs poorly, with its overall quality only ranked 37th by the World Health Organization. US spending on health care is now over 2.1 trillion dollars – \$7,000 per person. This is more than double the world average of \$2,571. This amounts to a whopping 15.5% of our GNP on health care – far more than any other country – which puts our businesses at a competitive disadvantage in the international marketplace.

"A prime benefit of a national single payer system is that it would save several hundred billion dollars annually by eliminating the high overhead and profits of the private, investor-owned insurance industry and reduce spending for marketing and other satellite services. Doctors and hospitals would be freed from the burdens and expenses of paperwork created by having to deal with multiple insurers with different rules - often rules designed to avoid payment," added Dunlea.

A recent study of a single payer system for California showed that it would save \$34 billion annually below what would otherwise be spent by California residents. Their legislature passed a single payer system but Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed it.

Public opinion polls have consistently shown strong public support for a universal health care system. For instance, a March 2007 poll by CBS/ NY Times found that 64 percent of respondents said the government should guarantee health insurance for all; 27 percent said it should not. An overwhelming majority in the poll said the health care system needed fundamental change or total reorganization.

Hunger Action Network Green Space



CSAs and the Value of Buying Local Food

Busy schedules and convenience food have led the diets of many New Yorkers' away from the farm fields and into fast food lines. However, rising food prices and concern for sustainable food systems have lead many New Yorkers to reevaluate what they eat and from where their food is coming.

"Food miles" refer to the distance a food item travels from the farm to your home. The food miles for items you buy in the grocery store tend to be 27 times higher than the food miles for goods bought from local sources. In the U.S., the average grocery store's produce travels nearly 1,500 miles between the farm where it was grown and your refrigerator.

So how does our food travel from farm field to grocery store? It's trucked across the country, hauled in freighter ships over oceans, and flown around the world. A tremendous amount of fossil fuel is used to transport foods such long distances. Combustion of these fuels releases carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and other pollutants into the atmosphere, contributing to global climate change, acid rain, and smog and air pollution.

Even the refrigeration required to keep your fruits, vegetables, dairy products and meats from spoiling burns up energy.

So what is an eco-conscious eater to do? Eat local! Buying food from local farms means getting food when it's at its prime.



Fresh food from local farms is healthier than industrially-farmed products because the food doesn't spend days in trucks and on store shelves losing nutrients.

Hunger Action is helping to increase access to local farm fresh food one neighborhood at a time by launching a series of 3 CSA's in the city. Last year, the pilot CSA was successfully launched in West Harlem and is continuing this season. A new **Community Supported Agriculture** (CSA) program is being launched in Long Island City, Queens as a comprehensive solution to a variety of shortcomings in the neighborhood's food structure.

CSA is a way to create a relationship with a local farm to receive a weekly basket of produce. By making a financial commitment to the farm, The Farm at Millers Crossing, residents become members of the CSA. Then, each week during the growing season (June-Nov)

the farmer delivers a share of produce to a central distribution site.

The LIC CSA's distribution site is housed at The Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement; a community based non-profit organization that offers comprehensive services to the youth, adults, seniors and families who in reside in Queensbridge Houses.

The LIC CSA hopes to increase the amount of fresh vegetables eaten by residents of Long Island City as well as tackle food affordability issues by offering a variety of flexible payment options that are viable for the neighborhood and appropriate for our farmer. We will build a greater sense of community through farm tips, potlucks, and the development of a CSA core group, all of which will connect neighbors to each other as well as to the farmers who grow their food.

For more information contact Danielle Seidita at (212)741-8192 ext 5# or dseidita@hungeractionnys.org.



BFW: Farm Bill Half a Loaf

DC, May 14, 2008—Bread for the World president Rev. David Beckmann issued the following statement concerning the 2008 Farm Bill. The bill was vetoed by President Bush due to its high subsidies for wealthy corporate farms but the veto was overridden by Congress.

“The 2008 Farm Bill represents half a loaf. Congress has increased funding for vital domestic nutrition programs but has failed to substantially reform the U.S. agricultural system.

“We rejoice that additional funding has been given to nutrition programs especially in light of the growing global hunger crisis that is hindering the efforts of struggling parents to feed their children. We celebrate the increases to the Food Stamp Program and funding for food banks. We are happy that the bill authorizes the Hunger Free Communities grant program, which will enable community-based organizations to work together to plan and implement local strategies to end hunger. We are also encouraged that it contains a pilot program that allows for the local purchase of food aid from sources closer to the countries in need.

“But we are missing the other half of the loaf—substantial reform of the commodity programs. Congress has failed to make our commodity programs fairer and more equitable. The bill does little to target subsidies to where they are most needed, but continues to concentrate payments to the largest and wealthiest landowners.

“This missing half has long-term and pernicious effects on global agriculture and trade. Current policies have helped stymie agricultural development in poor countries, leaving millions of people mired in poverty and helping to create the current hunger crisis worldwide. Rather

than respond to the new reality of global agriculture, the 2008 Farm Bill locks the United States into another five-year protectionist system that hampers the desperate efforts of small farmers to feed their families.

“We celebrate the important and urgent increases in nutrition funding. But we deeply lament the lack of serious reform of agricultural subsidies in this bill. Many will praise the 2008 Farm Bill as ‘the best we can do.’ We think the United States can and should do better. Therefore, with a heavy heart, we have chosen a middle of the road stance as the bill moves toward final passage.

“Our stand on the 2008 Farm Bill comes from a Biblical imperative that calls for a ‘harvest of righteousness’ (James 3:18). We will keep on working to reform the farm bill until it truly serves the needs of poor farm and rural families and all people around the world who struggle to feed themselves and their children.”

Below is a **summary of the farm bill** with respect to community food security issues, which fared better.

Community Food Projects: Section 4406(a)(7) – Funds the program at \$5 million annually, making it a permanent program.

Allows schools receiving federal funds for school lunch program the flexibility to specify a geographic preference for unprocessed agricultural products.

Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development Center: Section 4402(2) – Establishes a grant program to support the development of enterprises which distribute and market healthy and locally produced foods to undeserved urban,

rural, and tribal communities. \$3 million total (mandatory) over 3 years.

Provides \$500,000 in discretionary funds for a study of “food deserts,” - areas with limited healthy and fresh food retail access - and identify strategies which can reduce their incidence.

Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program: Provides \$20.6 million per year for fresh fruits and vegetable vouchers to low-income seniors that can be used at participating farmers’ markets, roadside stands and community supported agriculture subscriptions, worth \$10-\$100 annually per recipient.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program: \$500 million over 5 years for selected schools to purchase daily fresh fruit or vegetable snack. The program will focus on low-income school districts. Schools can preference local products.

Farmers’ Market Promotion Program: \$33 million over 5 years to provide competitive grants of up to \$75,000 to promote farmers’ markets and other direct marketing ventures. Sets aside 10% of funding to implement projects for using “food stamp” benefits at farmers’ markets.

State agencies may implement a nutrition education program for individuals eligible for program benefits that promotes healthy food choices .

Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP): – Provides funding to purchase commodities for emergency food assistance: \$190 million for FY 2008, \$250 million for FY 2009, and for FY 2010-2012 the program will be increased by the percentage the thrifty food plan is increased. TEFAP will have up to \$100 million in discretionary funds for administrative, distribution, and storage costs.

Hamilton Hill Food Processors

Hamilton Hill Food Processors - Hunger Action's food processing project - now has products for purchase. The products, sold as Healthy Community Harvest, are available in the NY Capital Region and the Adirondacks.

The long term goal of the project is to help combat childhood obesity by making nutritional foods available in low-income neighborhoods. The project also will promote job training and increase markets for local farmers.

Healthy Community Harvest's initial focus is to develop several products that will sell well. The second step will be to develop more nutritious products such as spaghetti sauce or baby foods that can be sold at a discount and/or distributed through emergency food program.

The initial products are 2 bread spreads: Tomato Bruschetta and Roasted Pepper

Bruschetta; and two jams: Raspberry Chardonnay and Blackberry Merlot.

Currently Healthy Community Harvest products can be purchased at 8 locations. The products are sold in gourmet food stores, restaurants and food coops. Hunger Action has launched the website for the Hamilton Hill Food Processors at www.healthycommunityharvest.com. The site offers online sales, recipe ideas, information about the project and a list of retailers.

Future updates will offer more recipe ideas, a nutrition section detailing the products nutritional qualities as well as more nutrition information for individuals. The site will offer information for youth and childhood obesity.

Hunger Action Network is in the final stages of the design for construction of our kitchen operation. This facility will



be located in the heart of Hamilton Hill in Schenectady. Construction should begin within a few weeks with the facility beginning operation by mid July.

You can purchase our products at: Crossroads - Chestertown; Gershon's Deli & Catering - Union St, Schenectady; Honest Weight Food Coop - Central Ave, Albany; Main St Ice Cream Parlor - Main St, Chestertown; Moon & River Café - S. Ferry St, Schenectady; Proctors Theater - State St, Schenectady; Putnum Market - Broadway, Saratoga Springs; Rock Hill Bakehouse - Exchange St, Glens Falls

Food Policy Council Update

The NYS Food Policy Council has been spending the winter and spring holding listening sessions across the state to get input into their mission. Community food security advocates are anxiously waiting for the next meeting of the Council hopefully in June to see what the first work steps for the Council will be.

Hunger Action and others have recommended that the Council make it a priority to increase the amount of locally grown food consumed in NYS. We have suggested that each of the state agencies in the Council report at the next meeting as to what their agencies are already doing to promote local food - and what additional steps or regulations they could do to support this. We want the Council to figure out how much local food is presently consumed in NY and

then develop a plan of action and goals on how to increase it. Many consumers want to support local foods and the hike in fuel prices is also helping make local foods cheaper. But there are still barriers to local food such as transportation, processing and retail outlets.

Many advocates are also interested in what steps can be taken to help bring more local supermarkets back into low-income areas. Too often the only sources of food in low-income neighborhoods are fast-food places with processed foods high in fats, oil and salt. The Philadelphia Food Trust has been convening supermarket officials in NY to see what support they need.

Hunger Action helped convene a conference on Making New York Food

Deserts Bloom at the State Capitol on June 6th. There are many local food initiatives around the state. NYC's Green Cart initiative will increase fresh fruit and vegetable vendors in neighborhoods. The NYS Farmers Market Federation is running a pilot program to match \$5 purchases with food stamps in targeted farmers markets. And CSAs are sprouting everywhere.

The NYS Office of Community Gardens will hold a 2-day planning session at SUNY New Paltz on July 26-27. The event will bring New York's gardening and urban farming leaders to explore what could be gained from working together. For info, Christina Grace at 718-722-2834 christina.grace@agmkt.state.ny.us.

Food Stamp Access in Rural Areas

Rural areas generally have a much lower food stamp participation rate than cities. This is largely due to the lack of transportation to the DSS office. Since many low income people do not have cars, it can be nearly impossible to get to the office. In some counties, the travel time can be over an hour by car.

Hunger Action is working to address this problem by teaming with the Sullivan County Dept. of Social Services (DSS) and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Union to create a space where people can apply for food stamps within a grocery store. Individual households get access to much needed money for food, grocery stores see more real dollars, and the local economy is stimulated. Since both food prices and the emergency food demand are on the rise, bringing these government dollars into the local economy is critical.

Hunger Action is attempting to emulate other models that have been effective at addressing this problem. Ulster County operates 8 satellite offices throughout the county. A DSS caseworker will have

walk in hours at a community based organization or other public space several times a month. Applicants can submit paperwork and have an interview on site. This program has also been effective in reducing the stigma of applying for food stamps, since it works to bring the office to the individual.

Hunger Action also increases food stamp access in rural areas through our toll free hotline. Individuals from Ulster, Sullivan, Putnam, and Dutchess Counties can call to get a free food stamp screening and get advice on applying. We also send them an application with where to go and what documents they need to bring.

The state is also addressing the problem of food stamp access in rural areas. Applicants can now recertify for food stamps over the telephone. Clients are mailed a notice that they must recertify, and can select a convenient time for a phone interview. The client can mail in all documentation, so they never have to go into the office. These calls generally take about 10-15 minutes.



In ten counties in NYS, applicants will be able to apply online through a community partner. Eventually, clients will be able to apply for food stamps on the internet from anywhere with internet access. This program will expand to the rest of the state, excluding New York City, by 2009. Working households can also apply for a waiver to the Face to Face interview, and substitute it for telephone interview. These new changes are part of statewide effort to streamline the food stamp application process to increase participation among working families.

Economic Security Cabinet Town Meetings

Governor Paterson has charged his Economic Security Cabinet with exploring opportunities to support struggling low-income families. They have scheduled a series of Town Hall meetings to provide an opportunity to hear about the State's commitment to protecting and enhancing economic security. Public comments are welcomed.

Advocates are pushing the Cabinet to create an Advisory Council. Anti-poverty advocates are concerned that the Cabinet talks about the working poor, not about the poor on welfare, SSI, unemployed, disabled, etc.

The Economic Security Cabinet ("Cabinet") has been charged with developing an Economic Security Agenda to support New York State's working families and grow the State's middle class. The Cabinet has four main objectives: 1) Reduce NYS's high cost of Living; 2) Expand educational opportunity in NYS's increasingly knowledge-based economy; 3) Strengthen the State's social safety net and share economic risk; and, 4) Bring good jobs to NYS.

Cabinet members agreed to two immediate priorities to focus the work of the Cabinet: 1) Coordinating work support

benefits; and, 2) Strengthening NYS' workforce development system.

Meetings will run from 4 to 7. The Meetings include: June 12 Capital Region – Schenectady Community College; June 19 Western NY Region – Erie Community College-Downtown; June 25 Finger Lakes Region – Rochester City Hall; June 26 Central NY Region – Onondaga Community College; July 28, NYC – 2 simultaneous sessions: Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building; Brooklyn Borough Hall; See <http://economicsecurity.us/> for more info.

Ending Child Hunger in Poughkeepsie

When schools close their doors and children begin their summer vacations, over 12 million kids in the USA who qualify for free or reduced price lunch do not receive this essential meal. For over two months, most low income children do not have access to nutritious meals like the ones they get during the school year. This is detrimental to a child's health and development. Since 1968, the Summer Food Service (SFSP) has existed to combat childhood hunger in the summer.

Hunger Action chose to focus on Poughkeepsie, NY this summer for our outreach efforts. Last year, over 70 percent of children in Dutchess County participated in the school meals program, whereas less than 8 percent participated in SFSP. This is below both the state and national averages, 22 and 12 percent respectively. The main reason identified for low participation is lack of sites and lack of knowledge of the program. Last year in Poughkeepsie, there were 2 open SFSP sites.

This summer, Hunger Action has helped to increase this number to 5. This summer, most children in the city of Poughkeepsie will be within walking distance of an open site. Hunger Action is also working to improve the quality of the program. We have arranged for a local farmer to bring more local fruits and vegetables to the program. We also are working to provide fun recreational activities for the children at the sites. Last summer, we conducted a similar outreach project in western Queens, and during this time the participation in the program doubled.

How SFSP Works

Participating children must be 18 years of age or younger. There are two types of SFSP sites. At a closed site, children must be enrolled in order to participate, and must provide documentation of income eligibility. At an open site however, any child 18 and under can receive a free meal. There are no forms to fill out



The benefits of SFSP are great. It provides children with a healthy meal and the community with summer employment opportunities, as well as bringing federal dollars into the economy. For more information or to find out how you can help, contact Veda Myers 212-741-8192 ex. 2# To find out about outreach projects in your area, contact the Nutrition Consortium at 518-436-8757.

Just Food ...from p. 1

Agriculture (CSA) projects in NYC in West Harlem and Long Island City. Just Food helps coordinate more than 60 such CSA projects in NYC. It helps promote agricultural stability on a larger regional scale by connecting rural farmers with New Yorkers of all income levels.

Just Food partners a city group with a regional farmer. During the winter and spring, the CSA farmer sells shares in her/his farm's upcoming harvest to individuals, families or institutions. The share price goes toward the cost of growing and distributing a season's worth of produce and paying the farmer a living wage. Each week, from June through

November, the CSA farmer delivers the week's share to a central neighborhood distribution site in NYC. Typically, each week's share consists of 7-10 types of vegetables, enough for a family of 2-3 people. Over the course of a season members get at least 40 different types of vegetables, usually organic, always fresh-picked and changing with the seasons.

Just Food's programs include The City Farms, Community Food Education, and Food Justice. These projects encourage NYC residents to grow, distribute, and market more food within their communities; learn and incorporate basic cooking skills to prepare healthy, seasonally-based meals at home; as well as to un-

derstand the concepts of and to become advocates for community food security and sustainable agriculture. Partners include Green Guerillas, Heifer Project International, Cornell Cooperative Extension-NYC, the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York, City Harvest, GreenThumb, community gardens, and EFPS.

"Forging community partnerships is essential to the fight against hunger and malnutrition. Working with HANNYS strengthens Just Food's ability to achieve its mission to make fresh, healthy foods accessible to all New Yorkers.," said Paula Lukats, CSA in NYC Program Manager for Just Food.

NY to Pilot On-Line Food Stamp Applications

Beginning in June, 11 counties in New York State will be able to apply for food stamps online through a community partner. These counties include: Chautauqua, Dutchess, Erie, Jefferson, Oneida, Onondaga, Orange, Suffolk, Tompkins, Ulster and Westchester.

The pilot is in conjunction with a new webpage (mybenefits.com) where New Yorkers can determine their eligibility for a variety of state and federal benefit programs.

This facilitated application will provide working families with the option of applying for food stamps on the Web with the help of community-based organizations. Eventually, this facilitated electronic application will allow working families to apply from multiple sites including their home computers. This is part of a larger statewide initiative to

enroll working families in the food stamp program. The state plans to expand the program to the entire state (excluding New York City) by the end of 2008.

Each county participating in the pilot has chosen a community partner who will assist clients in applying. Hunger Action will be the community partner in Ulster and Dutchess Counties. The partners will have a computer to screen the client for food stamps and help them to electronically submit an application. Then the appropriate documentation can be photocopied and mailed to the office.

If the client meets the requirements to receive a waiver to the face-to-face interview, they can have an interview over the phone and will never have to go into the office. Households where all adults work over 20 hours a week will not be required to go to the office to apply. They

can mail in their documentation and do their interview over the phone. Eligible applicants will no longer have to take time off from work to apply and recertify for food stamps. In addition, those outside of NYC will not be subject to fingerprinting.

By 2009, the state plans to enroll 100,000 additional households. Nationally, 30 percent of all households participating in the Food Stamp Program have earnings. In New York State, however, the proportion of such families is 21.6 percent. Studies have attributed this lag to the need for working families to navigate a complex application process in NY and to appear in person to apply. NY currently ranks number 40 in the country for participation of working people in the food stamp program.

For more information, contact Veda Myers 212-741-8192 ex. 2#

Schools ...from 1

agenda. The Senate wanted more funding to help schools purchase locally grown food. The Assembly wanted to increase both the state subsidies which have been unchanged for 20 years, while also paying (eliminating) the charge for reduced price meals.

It is expected that Governor Paterson will shortly release a compromise proposal. Gone will be the school breakfast mandate expansion (though a study will be done); junk food will be allowed to be sold for school fundraisers; the charge for reduced price meals will continue; and, any new funding will be eliminated.

The School Board Association unfortunately traditionally opposes any state efforts to require improved nutrition or

breakfast, arguing that this should be a local decision. In addition, they don't want the improved nutritional standards to apply to food donated by the federal government, since they are particularly unhealthy and unlikely to pass muster.

This bill addresses the growing problem of obesity among children which has resulted in escalating rates of diabetes, precursors to heart disease, asthma and other serious diseases in our children. This bill will help develop healthy eating habits at a young age. It will significantly decrease health care costs by preventing and reducing rates of chronic diseases in our children as they grow into adulthood.

It is also important to reduce hunger by increasing the number of students participating in the school meals program.

Hunger among children remains a significant problem in our state; nearly 50% of the two million plus individuals served annually by emergency food programs are children. Studies show that students who eat school breakfast increase their math and reading scores as well as improve their speed and memory in cognitive tests.

Research also shows that children who eat breakfast at school - closer to class and test-taking time - perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home. Students who skip breakfast are more likely to have behavioral problems - which negatively impacts upon the learning environment for other students. Such behavior can be particularly disruptive in middle and high schools.

Tax Fairness Would Solve State Budget Deficit

The growing state budget deficit (as much as \$20 billion over the next 3 years) has more to do with the tax cuts for the wealthy enacted during the Pataki era than with the recession and problems with Wall Street. Gov. Paterson cited the latter in justifying his opposition to raising taxes on the wealthy while proposing more budget cuts.

Since the deficit is due to tax cuts for the wealthy rather than out-of-control state spending, the solution should be to restore tax fairness, not cut state services. The state should also be more aggressive in reducing the amount of money we spend on health care. The most logical step would be to slash the enormous

waste and costs associated with private health insurance.

The state tax cuts enacted since 1994 reduced state tax revenues by over \$16 billion in the current fiscal year. The large tax cuts, primarily benefiting the wealthy and large multi-state corporations, have also shifted more of the tax burden onto regressive local property and sales taxes. The poorest 20% of New York taxpayers now pay twice as much of their income for state and local taxes as do wealthy New Yorkers such as Donald Trump.

The voodoo economics of the Pataki era failed to produce the promised economic

miracle. Cutting taxes for the rich and increasing corporate welfare for the politically connected have not created more jobs or stimulated the state economy, especially in upstate. They have merely made the rich richer while increasing income inequality in our state. And the last thing you want to do in a recession is to cut state spending, especially for services that benefit low and middle income families.

Going back to the state income tax system of thirty years ago (with brackets adjusted for inflation) would cut taxes for 95% of New Yorkers while raising \$7 billion annually in state revenues.

HUNGER ACTION NETWORK OF NEW YORK STATE MEMBERSHIP AND DONATION COUPON

- Yes, I want to help end the root causes of hunger by becoming a member:
 \$30 Individual \$5(low/fixed income) \$35small organization
 \$60 medium organization \$120 large organization
- Here is my donation of _____
- Please send me information about volunteer opportunities

Name _____ Organization _____
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Phone (day) _____ (eve.) _____ (FAX) _____ (E-Mail) _____
Credit care info: MC VISA Card No. _____ Exp Date. _____
signature _____

Please make checks payable to and return to Hunger Action Network of NYS, 275 State St., Albany NY 12210

**Hunger Action Network
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