

Advocacy Update 3.28.2020



NTFB VOICE Advocacy Update

ADVOCATING FOR A HUNGER-FREE, HEALTHY NORTH TEXAS

Howdy. I appreciate your patience as we seek to gather as accurate information as possible. We want to report on policy that could impact us and our organizations during this time but we also want it to be digestible and not overwhelming. Information is being released and changed at a rapid pace, here I hope to provide a 30,000 foot view of some issues that are relevant to us right now.

Summary of the Federal Coronavirus Response Measures

March 6, 2020

Phase I: Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act 2020
\$8.3 billion

- in emergency funding for federal agencies that fight the coronavirus, small business loans, and those with Medicare can consult their physicians by telephone or video conference.

March 18, 2020

Phase II: The Family First Coronavirus Response Act
\$100 billion

- for paid sick leave, free coronavirus testing, expanded food assistance, additional unemployment benefits, and requirement for additional protect to healthcare workers.

Food Assistance Breakdown

- \$1 billion for WIC
- \$400 million more for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), approximately \$20 million of that will come to Texas
- Flexibility for school meals: stops congregate meal requirement (feeding in a group setting), grab and go school food models approved, and children do not have to be present for a parent/guardian to pick up meals.
- Pandemic SNAP will allow the state to work with schools to help identify children who are on the free & reduced lunch program to identify households who can now receive the maximum household benefit amount of SNAP
- Texas: Temporarily suspends the SNAP work requirement for able-bodied adults without dependents
- Texas: Temporarily suspends the requirement for SNAP recipients to enroll in Employment & Training (E&T)
- Texas: Households will receive an extended SNAP certification period for 6 months, meaning those who need to re-certify in March, April, May will now have an extension to September, October November respectively.

March 25, 2020

Phase III: The CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act)

\$2.2 trillion stimulus bill

- direct payments to taxpayers and their dependents, expansion for unemployment benefits, student loan payment suspensions, mandate for affordable vaccines, public health fund for health workers, protections against foreclosures and evictions, allows early withdrawal of retirement funds without penalty, increased food support

Food Assistance Breakdown

- \$15.5 billion in additional funding for SNAP to help with increased caseload
- \$8.8 billion for child nutrition programs to ensure meals while school is not open due to increased caseload
- \$955 million for the Administration for Community Living to support nutrition programs for seniors and disabled in community homes
- \$200 million for the Department of Homeland Security to support items including food for individuals and families
- \$450 million more for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) with \$300 million being food purchases and \$150 million for storage and distribution costs

Phase IV: ??? stay tuned

Community Gardening is Booming

With more time on folks hands, there has been a surge in community and personal gardening.

Not going to lie. I did this as well without even thinking about it. My backyard garden is now filled with all the potential in the world.

Mainly because my children need things to do besides 8 hours of video games a day, so I hope to harvest those strawberries in a few months.

[Read more here](#) about the term "Victory Gardens" from World War I.

Have you been planting? Let me know or send me pictures, text my number below!

Learn: The Stafford Act

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (the Stafford Act) §401 states in part that: "All requests for a declaration by the President that a major disaster exists shall be made by the Governor of the affected State." There are two types of disaster declarations provided for in the Stafford Act: **emergency declarations** and **major disaster declarations**.

This is an over simplified: 101 of the Stafford Act.

Two types of declarations

Emergency - this declaration supplements State efforts to provide emergency services for the protection of life, property, public health, safety or averting a threat.

Major Disaster - this declaration supplements States with funds from federal assistance programs for individuals and public infrastructure for emergency and permanent work. This is typically from natural events like hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, snowstorms, fire etc.

Two types of assistance

Under both declarations money comes to assist in two pots: Public Assistance and Individual Assistance.

Emergency declarations typically the only public assistance available is money for emergency protective measures (for hospitals and healthcare services) and any individual assistance comes in the form of the Individuals and Households Program which helps pay for rental assistance, lodging expenses, emergency leases, and temporary housing units.

Major Disaster declarations have public assistance that is for debris removal, emergency protective measures, roads and bridges, water facilities, buildings and equipment, utilities, and parks and recreational facilities. The individual assistance allows for the following programs Individuals and Households Program; Crisis Counseling Program, Disaster Case Management, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Disaster Legal Services, Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

What's the process?

Counties issue their declarations and report to the State, after so many counties issue a declaration, the State then declares an emergency/disaster. After so many States declare an emergency/disaster, the President issues a National Disaster. Things must proceed in a very orderly manner which can often take time.

What do we have now?

On March 13, 2020 the President declared a federal state of **Emergency** which opened \$50 billion dollars to help emergency protective measures. This caused difficulty among food banks because this declaration does not open up the type of funding that helps food banks get federal assistance to help with food distribution and services. However, on March 25, 2020, the President issued a **Major Disaster** declaration for Texas at the request of the Governor after gathering requests from some of the 254 counties in Texas.

This opens up federal funding and the possibility standard policy changes for food banks to get more food out to areas impacted by the increased unemployment.

The North Texas Food Bank alongside Feeding Texas and the other food banks in Texas are currently working on submitting all the paperwork to bring increased assistance to our service areas. Please stay tuned and we hope to report that our efforts are a success.

A special thanks to Alana Pierre & Taylor Hanna at North Texas Food Bank for fielding policy information as it comes to us.

Questions or Comments?

Not kidding, send pics of those gardens.

Valerie Stone Hawthorne, PhD
Government Relations Director
North Texas Food Bank
Direct: 832.851.0303
policy@ntfb.org



Don't want these updates any longer? Email policy@ntfb.org and I'll remove you quickly but remorsefully...

Apologies if you received this twice, the kinks are stubborn!