

Advocacy Update 06.01.2021



NTFB VOICE

Advocacy Update

ADVOCATING FOR A HUNGER-FREE, HEALTHY NORTH TEXAS

STATE

Sine Die (Sign-ey die) – Latin – Adjournment for an indefinite period

The regular session of the 87th Texas Legislature has adjourned. But it is likely they will be back for a special session. For the past 140 days, our Texas lawmakers have been working day and night trying to get a constrained budget through, understand what happened to the electrical grid during the epic winter storm, argue what should be taught in public school, what is a City's right to defund local police, how to handle assigned genders and their roles in school sports, what is freedom to carry arms, and define voting regulations. Buried in the middle of all these deep and heavy topics were anti-hunger advocates fighting step-by-step to make the SNAP application process stronger and increase the funding to grant programs that help all communities get the nutrition they need.

For a recap of all our priority bills, please see the attached .pdf to see their path.

THE GREAT NEWS

SB 224 by Senator Perry (R-Lubbock) passed favorably out of both chambers and is now awaiting a signature from Governor Abbot to (FINALLY) be signed into law. This bill asks Texas Health & Human Services to simplify the SNAP application for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities, that have no earned income, by using the two-page simplified SNAP application available through a USDA waiver. Additionally, it will extend the benefit period to 36 months, reducing paperwork and keeping a vulnerable population enrolled in the program longer without the stress of going through the 9–12-month renewal process. Finally, it will allow the Texas Health & Human Services Commission to notify Texans that are enrolled in Medicaid, that they may be eligible for SNAP and send them some information about the program.

This bill has been a labor of love for so many who have called their legislators, wrote emails, driven to Austin to deliver testimony and discussed its importance with anyone that would listen! We thank all of you who brought this bill all the way to the finish line.

The Good News

The bill that would modernize the Vehicle Asset Test for SNAP unfortunately died right at a critical last step. It had made it through the process of going through the House getting the votes it needed. It left the House with favorable votes to head over to the Senate but went no further. Though this is disappointing, it is still something to celebrate. Anti-hunger advocates were able to educate so many law makers on the history and background of this topic. It went much further than it has been able to go in past sessions. As we look forward to the 88th session in 2023, we will have a firm and quick place to start to race this one to the finish line.

FEDERAL

The President released his budget for the 2022 fiscal year. As a reminder a President's Budget is simply his wish-list for Congress as they begin their annual budget process. Of note, his budget for the U.S. Department of Agriculture had a 17% increase request.

The President's budget would expand eligibility to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. SNAP is expected to average 45.4 million people on the program per month in FY 2022, compared to 43.9 million in 2021. Even though the participation is expected to grow, the cost of the program is expected to decrease after the expiration of a 15% boost in SNAP payments this September. SNAP projected to cost \$105.8 billion for FY 2022. SNAP ballooned under the pandemic, going from \$67.8 billion in 2020 to \$114 billion in 2021.

The President's USDA budget proposal would also make permanent a program created during the pandemic a part of the school lunch program, to curb child hunger. The program would provide students who qualify for free or reduced lunch with EBT cards to purchase foods at their local grocery stores during their summer break.

The largest program boost allocates \$6.7 billion in funds to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or WIC.

LOCAL

[REGISTER HERE:](#) Would you like to learn more about the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (CACFP)? Please join a panel of fabulous guests to learn more during this lunchtime webinar on Thursday, June 3rd featuring:
Eddie Longoria - Southwest Regional Division Director Special Nutrition Programs, USDA Food & Nutrition Service
Paula Watkins - Founder & Executive Director, The Bridge at Fair Park
Sarai Ferreira - Child Nutrition Program Manager, CitySquare
Sharon Ray – CEO, Nutriservice, Inc.

Community Gardener?

Want to start or support a community garden? [Apply for the "Seeding the Dream" Garden Grant here!](#)



Questions? Comments? Hit Reply!

Fun Fact: The last time the Federal budget was completed on-time was 1997

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If you no longer wish to receive these updates, hit reply and I will remove you, and maybe also cry a little.