
At A Glance

- **Three new bills will help hungry kids during summer**
 - **The ERS is moving**
 - **State Legislative wrap-up wins**
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Federal

Child Nutrition Re-Authorization Bills

The Child Nutrition Re-Authorization is a collection of bills that direct our federal child nutrition programs. It covers programs like School Breakfast & Lunch, After School Feeding Programs, Women, Infants, & Children SNAP (WIC), Summer Meals and more.

Three bills were introduced in the Senate that will strengthen these programs:

The Hunger Free Summer for Kids Act of 2019 (S.1918): would approve two other options to reach more children. The first would allow meals to be eaten off-site through mobile feeding programs and backpack meal programs. The second option would make the summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) program permanent because it was shown to reduce child hunger by over 30 percent.

Summer Meals Act of 2019 (S.1908): would change the area eligibility test from 50% to 40% which would allow more low-income communities to provide summer meals; it would allow nonprofit and local government agencies to provide meals year-round through the Summer Food Service Program; it would allow all feeding sites to serve three meals; and it would provide grant money to support efforts to reach under-served areas. It also includes a section that supports meal service in disaster situations.

Stop Child Summer Hunger Act of 2019 (S.1941): would give families who have children who qualify for free and reduced-price school meals with an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card to help them get nutrition during the summer.

If you are interested in ways to support these bills, please reply to this email and I will show you how!

The ERS is moving

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary, Sonny Perdue has told the Economic Research Service it will be relocated from Washington, DC to Kansas City.

Most employees who have dedicated their career to studying food assistance, climate change, and the rural economy are likely to quit (90% said they will).

Meaning, there is opportunity to re-stock the veteran scientists in the ERS, who study climate change, farm subsidies, and hunger with new blood. The fears and challenges that surround this highly debated issue are strong and sending a wave of concern through the USDA.

State

On June 16, Governor Abbott reached the deadline to sign or veto bills. Let's look back on some of the food security bills from this session.

PASSED:

SB 2334 (Creighton)/HB 3668 (Walle): A grant program for Food Banks to respond during disaster & high need. This bill established a \$25 million grant program for Texas Food Banks to buy food and equipment to prepare for natural or activated disasters. Money was not put into this program, but the program is in place.

SB 1834 (Alvarado): A pilot program that encourages fruits or vegetables purchases.

This allows the set-up of a pilot program that would help SNAP recipients buy more produce. This is like the "double dollar" style programs that give \$2 for \$1 buying power for produce at participating locations.

SB 981 (Kolkhorst) / HB 2335 (Walle): Disaster SNAP.

In times of disaster, contractors with the Department of Health & Human Services set up locations to help enroll impacted communities for disaster SNAP. This bill establishes a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between those who can sign up people for SNAP, the department of Health & Human Services, and local governments to have pre-planned locations and to get people quickly signed for disaster SNAP, in the event it is necessary

HB 1483 (Frank): Pilot for social services self-sufficiency.

When SNAP recipients make more money than household income limit, they lose their benefits. This can prevent families from looking for higher paying positions or better jobs, due to the fear of losing their monthly benefits. This pilot program calls for an experiment. What would happen if the sharp cut-off limit for income was removed? Would that result in a self-sufficiency as workers are allowed to explore all opportunities for work?

HB 1218 (Klick): SNAP distribution calendar.

SNAP is usually issued within the first two weeks of each month in Texas. Grocers often struggle to keep their shelves and personnel stocked during this time. Distributing SNAP benefits throughout the month will help grocers even out their business processes and allow SNAP customers more selection at the stores.

STOPPED:

HB 285 (Springer): Time limit waivers for work requirements.

This bill would have prevented Texas from ever receiving a waiver for SNAP work requirements. Even the in the event of an emergency or disaster.

HB 320 (King): TANF Drug Testing.

This bill would have required Temporary Assistance Needy Families recipients to go through drug screens to receive benefits

SB 671 (Creighton): Photo EBT.

This bill would have required SNAP benefits cards to be printed with a photo of the recipients on the card. As a reminder SNAP is issued to a household, not individuals.

I want to thank all the advocates, community partners and organizations who rallied around these bills to protect food access for our neighbors. Our State Organization Feeding Texas worked hard to provide increased access to food this session and we thank them for leading the way.

We also want to thank all of our service area Representatives and Senators who worked so hard this session for Texans, especially our Plano delegation who worked with us so closely. We look forward to working with them during the interim and are happy to serve as a resource for anyone who wants to know more about our public policy priorities at the State Level.

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