

Advocacy Update 7/2/2018

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Farm Bill Update: Both the Senate and the House have passed their versions of the Farm Bill. Now, both chambers have to come together, sit down, and iron out the differences in the two bills. This will not be an easy task because each version is extremely different from the other. Gloves will come off and this battle may drag on into 2019. No word yet as to who will serve on the conference committee, however traditionally a Texas member of congress is asked to join.

As a reminder the Farm Bill contains the policy guidelines for SNAP, CSFP, SNAP-Ed, and the funding for TEFAP. *In brief* - The Senate version is truly bipartisan and is fair to both farmers and those who need nutrition assistance. The House version takes a hardline towards mandating work requirements towards all households who receive SNAP, as well as, instructing States to set up Employment & Training programs for all SNAP beneficiaries. The cost to run these programs comes directly out of client benefits.

Smithfield: A donor to North Texas Food Bank, Smithfield was ordered to pay \$25M to a couple impacted by poor farming practices involving hog waste and bad conditions. Smithfield, the world's largest pork producer will soon be hit with several more class-action lawsuits from multiple plaintiffs. NTFB was not aware of poor animal welfare or the conditions at Smithfield when the donations were accepted in 2017.

SNAP Error Rate is not the Fraud Rate: Two articles have recently come out with two different slants. The first article addresses the SNAP Error rate and puts the blame on improved investigations of state agencies and miscalculations. <https://www.thefencepost.com/news/snap-error-rate-6-3-percent-not-3-66-percent/> The second article focuses the blame on SNAP recipients of giving false information to state agencies to cause the error rate. <https://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2018/07/01/4-billion-in-snap-money-went-to-improper-food-stamp-payments/>

It's important to hear what both sides are saying and to know that **SNAP Error Rate is NOT the SNAP Fraud Rate**, as made clear by Brandon Lipps, head of the USDA. Be prepared to defend this statement if this story hits more news and social circles. SNAP Fraud is calculated at less than 1%.

Federal Budget: Conference is about to kickoff closed-door sessions for 3 spending bills. The Senate and House must agree on them to pass. Interestingly, there are typically tag-along riders that accompany these bills. In example, both chambers are seeking to ban plastic drinking straws at the Capitol. This wave is catching on and plastic straws are the new item to hate. Personal portable straws are the new enviro-loving gift to give. NTFB branded ones anyone? <http://a.co/9Puv037>

Summer Meals: Locally, summer food program participation is down. Some claim it's the boost to the economy, some blame the weather, and some are blaming immigration fears. Local hunger organizations are hinting towards an immigration push back, but no one is collecting data on it. **Have you seen anything?**

Public Charge: Though NTFB is not currently advocating for or against proposed changes to public charge, we are watching the process very carefully.

In brief, the Department of Homeland Security has filed a new proposed policy that would use enrollment into SNAP, EITC, Pell Grants, WIC or a number of other federal programs against a person, and their children, who are applying for legal resident status in the United States. The proposal has been filed, and the budget office has concluded that the bill would have a zero cost. Next step is that it will move forward for public comment in the next month.

The United Way, DISD, Texas Hunger Initiative, Children at Risk, and faith-based leaders put in a phone call to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) detailing the cost to the non-profit sector on providing extra meals from immigrants who reject SNAP, the cost of missed educational opportunities from hungry students, the cost of an unhealthy future workforce, and the medical costs associated with poor diet options.

The CBO admitted they did not factor any of the consequences of this proposed policy into account when giving it a “zero cost” title, they only considered administrative costs. No word as to whether they will revisit their measurements. Currently, NTFB is not taking a position on the proposed changes to Public Charge but is willing to supply impartial data or information to any parties who may ask or be concerned.

Seniors in Rural Collin County: Collin County Commissioner Thomas (Precinct 3) wants to help feed the seniors of his district. He’s quite excited for the NTFB warehouse to be coming to Collin County. He spoke of many rural seniors in the upper parts of Collin County, close to Fannin County, who have limited resources to access help. He is looking forward to our partnership.

Map the Meal Gap 2017 Data is Here! I received the new Map the Meal Gap calculations and have created a Tableau Map. Data was provided by Dr. Craig Gunderson through Feeding America. More information is to come about these numbers as we take some time to dive in and see what the data stories are telling us.

Are you going to visit someone or some company and need area or zip code specific maps to take with you? Let me know and I can help!

Access the map here: Desktop or Laptop needed

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/valerie.hawthorne6410#!/vizhome/MMG2018NTFBServiceArea/Sheet1?publish=yes>

Have a great 4th of July week!

Val

