

Advocacy Update 12.21.18



NTFB VOICE Advocacy Update

ADVOCATING FOR A HUNGER-FREE, HEALTHY NORTH TEXAS

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Farm Bill signed into law by the President...with a catch

Immediately after the President signed the Farm Bill into law, The US Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service Agency, issued a [press statement](#), regarding the issuance of a Notice of Proposed Rule Making in the federal registrar, [about SNAP eliminating waivers for States](#). ([NPRM what is that?](#))

Currently, 36 states waive at least part of their SNAP populations from the existing three-month limit for able-bodied adults without dependents to receive benefits within a three-year period if they're not working at least 80 hours a month. ([ABAWDs what is that?](#))

Currently, State or partial state waivers are granted if the state's unemployment rate is above 10% or if their unemployment rate is 20% above the national average. With such a low national average rate of unemployment, many states and areas are currently eligible for these waivers. Texas does not currently have a state or partial state waiver.

[Feeding America has issued their press statement as to their thoughts on the proposed rule.](#)

Val's Thoughts:

As I comb through the 55-page document, one thing is clear. To be fair, some of it really makes sense, to be critical, some of it is vague and ambiguous; and policy should rarely be left up to interpretation. *"These proposed changes would ensure that ABAWD time limit waiver requests are only approved in areas where waivers are truly necessary."* States' Rights to protect their own citizens are at risk in this change, and the challenge and replacement of this 20+ year old rule will likely be met with very uneasy water in the political community.

North Texas Food Bank will provide a comment during the 60-day comment period that focuses on what the rule change would mean to us directly and the emergency food network as a whole. What that comment looks like, will require some more in depth thought, review and analysis on the contents of those 55 pages.

Congress has already rejected these changes in the previous drafts of the Farm Bill. Using the rule making procedure to circumvent that traditional legislation method is a matter that deserves the utmost attention and one we intend to take seriously.

Government Shutdown

[It's been almost a year since our last threat of a government shutdown.](#) In their budget, at the request of the President, the House has already approved funding for a border wall, however, that items still need to go through the Senate, costing around \$5.7B. With the upcoming majority change in the House, a Senate focusing on fiscal responsibility, there are so many ways this possible shutdown could go that even some of the best political analysts are stumped.

Feeding America has issued a statement regarding the impact to Federal Feeding Programs *IF* the government does indeed shut down tonight.

It is important to note the listed changes stated would take weeks to occur and would occur only if Continuing Resolutions were not passed. (e.g. it is not time to worry or extend worry to our partner agencies and clients, yet):

SNAP: Currently, US Department of Agriculture has sufficient resources to fund SNAP benefits through January. If the government continues to be shut down, SNAP benefits are unlikely to be available without further appropriation.

Child nutrition and WIC programs: School meals, summer and after-school programs, and WIC also have sufficient funds to operate for a few weeks.

TEFAP, CSFP, and Trade Mitigation: Food already ordered should still be delivered on time. All additional orders could be delayed if staff involved will be on furlough (temporary lay-off or reduced work hours).

I will keep you updated as pertinent information comes through the news.

Getting ready for State Session!

The 86th Legislative Session is around the corner and we are excited! We spent the month of December reaching out to our state elected officials to let them know how the North Texas Food Bank impacts their districts, and what we need from them to continue our mission.

In the past couple of weeks we have had meaningful contact, tours, meetings and informative discussions with 11 of our State Officials. Our Advocacy Day in Austin will be February 19th where we will meet with our entire service area delegation and make sure everyone understands that hunger is not acceptable in North Texas.

Curious as to what is coming to [your State House](#) District from NTFB? [Check out this workbook.](#)

Choose your district at the top of the data viz.

We've chosen our policy priorities and detailed information on those will come in the new year.

Questions or Comments?

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