



Wins from the 88th Texas Legislative Session

This year's legislative session was [Feeding Texas'](#) most successful since Texas food banks came together as a network over 20 years ago to engage state lawmakers in the fight against hunger. With the support of food banks, including the North Texas Food Bank, and anti-hunger champions across the state, the Texas Legislature passed several new laws to prevent hunger for Texans experiencing food insecurity.

The network successfully advocated for three bills and increased funding for food distribution, all priorities identified by Texas food banks and other advocates ahead of the session. These priorities included:

1. Updating the SNAP Vehicle Asset Test ([HB 1287](#)):

Texas uses a Vehicle Asset Test to determine SNAP eligibility, limiting the value of the vehicles that a household may own and still qualify for the program. **HB 1287 makes a one-time inflationary adjustment to the Vehicle Asset Test to reflect today's car values better**, increasing limits from \$15,000 to \$22,500 for the first car and from \$4,650 to \$8,700 for additional vehicles. We expect thousands more across the state to be eligible for SNAP. The bill was authored by Rep. Ryan Guillen and sponsored by Sen. César Blanco.

2. Implementing pre-release SNAP registration ([HB 1743](#)):

Early access to SNAP benefits ensures formerly incarcerated Texans have immediate food resources so they can begin rebuilding their lives. **HB 1743 supports people exiting the criminal justice system by allowing eligible individuals to apply for SNAP before their release to access food upon release.** This supports the reentry process and reduces recidivism. The bill was authored by Rep. Jeff Leach and sponsored by Sen. Royce West.

3. Increasing funds for produce rescue:

The Surplus Agricultural Products Grant helps food banks rescue surplus or unsellable produce from Texas farmers for distribution to hungry Texans. 100% of program funds go to farmers and transportation providers to offset the cost of harvesting, storage, packaging, and freight. **The network achieved a \$10.2M increase in funding for the Surplus Agricultural Products Grant, doubling funds to \$20.4M for the biennium** and doubling the produce purchasing power of food banks across the state. This is a win-win-win for hungry Texans, farmers, and the environment.

4. Exempting state transportation-related taxes and fees for food banks ([HB 3599](#)):

State transportation-related fees are significant food bank expenses. **HB 3599 will exempt food banks from fuel taxes and registrations for their fleets, meaning they can reinvest those costs into feeding their communities.** Rep. Shawn Thierry authored the bill, which was sponsored by Sen. Chuy Hinojosa.

Gov. Greg Abbott signed HB 1287, HB 1743, and HB 3599 into law in June, and they went into effect Sept. 1, 2023. These legislative victories represent the hard work of many different stakeholders and are responsive to the needs expressed by our communities and Texans who have lived through experiences of hunger.

Throughout the session, food banks worked tirelessly to advance the network's policy priorities. Government relations and advocacy staff at the food banks played a crucial role in gaining support from legislators and engaging community members in advocacy to support these bills.

We were honored to have overwhelming bipartisan support for these anti-hunger policies, proving that regardless of political affiliation, Texans can all agree that food should not be an impossible choice. From small, rural communities to major metropolitan areas, these new laws will help feed Texas families and support food banks across the state.

We look forward to fighting for food security during the next Texas Legislative Session in 2024.