



P.O. BOX 451
LITTLE ROCK, AR 72203
501-374-6675 / 501-374-6365 (FAX)
arhunger@comcast.net / www.arkansashunger.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT

Susan Handford

WIC Program, Arkansas Department of Health

VICE PRESIDENT

Rev. Howard Gardner

Inner City FutureNet, Little Rock

TREASURER

Jennifer Ferguson

Arkansas Community Foundation

SECRETARY

Dr. Robert Anderson, Sr.

Arkansas Delta Living Academy, Altheimer

Rose Adams

Arkansas Community Action Agencies
Association

Abraham Carpenter, Jr.

Carpenter's Produce, Grady

Beverly Froud

Pulaski County Extension Service, Little Rock

Rev. Stephen Copley

Arkansas Interfaith Conference

Georgia Gilkey

Arkansas Food Stamps Program

Metta Holman

Clarksville Housing Authority, Clarksville

Gwendolyn Jones

Exodus Food Pantry, Hope

Rev. Johnnie Jones

Providence Baptist Church, Hope

Allison Stroud

Food for Kids, Arkansas Rice Depot

Anna Via

Arkansas River Valley Area Council, Dardanelle

Arma Woods

Full Gospel Outreach Ministry, Montrose

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hope Coulter

April 21, 2005

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Advocates Urge Senator To Protect Food Stamps

Nutrition and family advocates are calling on Arkansas Senator Blanche Lincoln to fight hard against proposed cuts to the Food Stamp program.

“There are lots of threats to working families in this budget,” says Rich Huddleston, executive director of Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. “But right now Food Stamps are our most pressing concern.” Food Stamp funding falls under the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Committee, along with farm subsidies and commodity programs.

Senator Lincoln sits on both the Senate Agriculture and Senate Finance Committees, and thus plays a key role in ongoing efforts to finalize funding amounts for next year’s budget. House and Senate committees are now conferring jointly about the allocation of billions of dollars to domestic discretionary and entitlement programs. Significant cuts will undoubtedly occur, due to congressional pressure to reduce a deficit fueled by the Iraq war and tax cuts to high-income Americans.

Under the House Resolution, food stamp benefits in Arkansas would be cut by between \$37 and \$74 million over five years. As many as 12,000 people could be eliminated from the program, which currently serves over 372,000 Arkansans living in 152,000 households. The average monthly payment to food stamp recipients in Arkansas is \$219.

Hope Coulter, executive director of the Arkansas Hunger Coalition, shares Huddleston’s concern. “Food Stamps is a proven, efficient program that helps thousands of Arkansas families stay afloat

during hard times. You sometimes hear a lot of hollering about waste and fraud in this program, but that's just not true. Arkansas's Food Stamp office has won awards for outstanding performance and accuracy for nine out of the past ten years.”

Coulter stresses that food stamps serve many different kinds of low-income households. “They're part of the safety net for laid-off workers hoping to get hired again, and for people leaving welfare and moving into low-income jobs. Over 95 percent of food stamp benefits go to households with income below the federal poverty level. Over half of all food stamp recipients are children. Another quarter are elderly or disabled.”

Last November, a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) report based on Census Bureau surveys named Arkansas as the state with the highest rate of food insecurity and hunger—16 percent. The Census Bureau also shows Arkansas as the poorest state in the nation, with 18% of the state's population living in poverty.

For more information, contact Hope Coulter at the Arkansas Hunger Coalition, 501-374-6675.