



FOOD JOURNAL

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2006 BUDGET BILL PASSED

February 1, the House passed the Senate's version of the 2006 Budget Reconciliation bill (S.1932: Deficit Reduction Act of 2005) by a vote of 216 to 214, and the President signed it on February 9. The bill cuts \$38.8 billion from the federal budget, which will affect primarily moderate- and low-income students, families, the elderly, abused and neglected children, and people with disabilities.

Congressional Budget Office reports estimate: Medicaid changes will impose new costs on 13 million poor recipients and end insurance coverage for 65,000 Medicaid enrollees; cuts to federal child-support enforcement funds will shift costs to the states and eliminate billions of dollars in child-support payments; new welfare to work requirements will cost states \$8.4 billion over 5 years; and Medicare insurers will save \$22 billion over 10 years.

Medicaid: The bill cuts Medicaid by \$27 billion over ten years by allowing states to reduce benefits and require poor mothers and children to pay more for their health care. It requires states to demand proof of citizenship (birth certificate or passport) from all new and renewing Medicaid applicants, which many do not possess (one in five African Americans 60 years or older does not have a birth certificate).

Child Support: The bill cuts federal funding of child support enforcement activities by \$4.9 bil-

lion over 10 years. As a result of this cut, at least \$8.4 billion of child support will go uncollected.

Student Loans: The bill cuts \$12.7 billion from student loan programs over five years directly affecting student and parent borrowers with higher fees and interest rates.

Aid to Disabled: The bill cuts \$425 million from cash aid for poor people with disabilities.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Child Care: The bill reauthorizes the welfare-to-work program through 2010 and reduces some flexibility states now have in implementing their programs. The bill requires most states to make hasty increases in work participation. On average, states will have to increase the number of families participating in work activities by 69%. The small increase in child care funding (\$200 million a year) is inadequate to cover the increased work demands.

Foster Care: The budget bill reduces assistance to abused and neglected children by about \$1.3 billion over 10 years — limiting access to foster care assistance by grandparents or other relatives and restricting case management and planning. Cuts far outweigh increases in child welfare spending.

The good news:

- The bill made no cuts to food stamps.
- Medicaid will be made available to some families who cannot obtain private health

insurance and have a child with a significant disability.

On the whole, the cuts make up less than one-half of one percent of federal expenditures over the next five years, negligibly impacting the deficit.

For more information on the bill, visit www.chn.org or www.cbpp.org. The actual bill and history can be accessed at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

PRESIDENT'S FY2007 BUDGET

The President presented his Fiscal Year 2007 budget on February 6. Proposals for nutrition programs include:

Food Stamp Program: allows individuals and families to obtain food stamps even if they have retirement savings (a five-year \$589 million program increase; about 100,000 people would be added to the program when fully implemented in FY 2008). Limits states' ability to get food stamps to 300,000 people in low-income working families with children who do not receive cash welfare (also costing 40,000 children access to free school meals).

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC): weakens the program (the funding level does not meet the anticipated need and proposes lower spending on nutrition services and administration, forcing reductions in clinic hours and possibly closing clinics in rural and hard to serve locales).

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP): eliminates the program that provides food to more than 400,000 low-income elderly people (seniors comprise nearly 90% of recipients, but the program also serves women and children).

Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFNP): eliminates the program that supports state and local projects to alleviate hunger and food insecurity.

For the full analysis, go to www.frac.org/news/budget02.07.06.html.

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM (SFSP) RECRUITMENT

Millions of low-income children have nutritious meals during the school year through the federal school breakfast and lunch programs. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is looking for organizations to help make sure those children do not go hungry once school lets out.

SFSP reimburses approved sponsors for serving up to two healthy meals to low-income children through age 18. Meal service sites can include schools, recreation centers, playgrounds, parks, churches, community centers, day camps, housing projects and migrant centers. Sponsors can prepare meals in a central kitchen or obtain them from any number of sources, including government agencies, school districts or commercial food-service companies.

The program is offered statewide in areas or at sites where more than 50% of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program. In addition to the statewide need for sponsors to provide end-of-summer meal sites, special efforts are underway to sign up providers in these high-need, low-income areas: Andrews, Bonham, Breckenridge, Brookshire, Childress, Columbus, Dublin, Dumas, Emory, Ennis, Ferris, Galveston, Graham, Grand Saline, Kerrville, La Grange, Lancaster, Lewisville, Llano, Midlothian, Palmer, Port Arthur, Rockport, Rockwall, Round Rock, San Saba, Seminole, Sullivan, Wharton and Winnie.

Organizations eligible to sponsor the program include schools, nonprofit residential summer camps, government agencies and tax-exempt organizations. Potential sponsors are required to take training courses offered in several Texas cities before participating in the Summer Food Service Program. Training begins in February for early applicants.

For more information, call 512/420-2449.

FOOD INSECURITY LINKED TO NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENTAL CONSEQUENCES FOR CHILDREN

Published in the December 2005 *Journal of Nutrition* by researchers from Cornell University and the University of South Carolina, "Food Insecurity Affects School Children's Academic Performance, Weight Gain, and Social Skills" reports strong links between food insecurity and negative developmental consequences in children kindergarten to third grade, including consequences for social skills and behavior, reading performance, mathematical skills, and weight gain.

Using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study — Kindergarten Cohort, the study sample consisted of 21,260 children, in 1,592 elementary schools, who attended kindergarten in 1998-1999 and were followed up to the third grade. The longitudinal data allowed analysis of the effects of food insecurity over time. They used: data on food insecurity from USDA's food security module; direct academic assessments of mathematical and reading ability; measured weights, heights and resulting body mass indices (BMIs); and evaluations of students' social skills and behaviors from teacher questionnaires.

The authors discuss two possible mechanisms between food insecurity and developmental outcomes. One — food insecurity results in compromised dietary quality and quantity, both of which can negatively affect child development. The other — food insecurity may act as a psychological or emotional stressor, affecting parent and child behavior. This paper confirms the negative impact of household food insecurity for early elementary age children and demonstrates that food insecurity influences abilities that impact future academic and life success (reading, math, and social skills) — reaffirming the urgency to end this problem expressed by many nutritionists, advocates and health professionals.

Get the summary from www.frac.org, or the full article from www.nutrition.org (subscription or purchase required).

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Food Stamp Education and Outreach Program (FSEOP): The Texas Association of Community Action Agencies, Inc. (TACAA) seeks community-based organization subcontractors to conduct food stamp outreach and application assistance for five populations in Texas: Urban - Dallas Co.; Urban - Harris Co.; Urban - Travis/Hays Cos.; Rural - Northeast or Central east; and Elderly - Northeast, Central, or the Valley. See the Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for details. Subcontracts are scheduled to begin 04/24/06 and end 08/31/07. The RFPs are available on TACAA's web site, www.tacaa.org, or mailed to potential subcontractors identified by TACAA, or upon request. The primary goal is to increase participation in the Food Stamp Program. **Interested organizations must submit a non-binding letter of intent to TACAA by 5:00 p.m. CST, 03/08/06, with proposals due 03/31/06.** Details are in the RFPs. For further information or for a copy of one or more of the RFPs, call 800/992-9767, ext. 3, or 512/462-2555, ext. 3, e-mail fseop@tacaa.org, or fax 512/462-2004. Identify which RFP you want.

Gardener's Supply Donation Program: The program provides cash or products to nonprofit organizations in the U.S. focused on the following areas: gardening, sustainable agriculture, food, environment, and hunger. Submit applications any time; requests are reviewed quarterly. The company also provides the Garden Crusader Awards to honor individuals improving the world through gardening. Nominations accepted until 06/01/06. Visit www.gardeners.com.

The Food Journal is available by electronic notification by e-mailing foodjournal@tacaa.org.

Archived issues of the Food Journal are available on-line at www.tacaa.org.

The Food Journal welcomes your comments and ideas for stories. Call 800/992-9767, ext. 206, or e-mail comments and suggestions to foodjournal@tacaa.org.

UPDATE ON TEXAS' NEW ELIGIBILITY SYSTEM

In January, the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) launched a three-month pilot of a new system for enrolling Texans in public benefits (food stamps, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and long-term care). The pilot, in Travis and Hays Counties, tests a new on-line application and the use of privately-run call centers. If the pilot succeeds, HHSC will expand the system to other areas beginning in April.

Soon, Texans will no longer apply for benefits at local HHSC offices or through the mail for Children's Medicaid and CHIP. Under the new integrated eligibility system, HHSC will close roughly one-third of its local offices, significantly reduce state eligibility staff, and replace these offices and staff with four centralized call centers and an Internet application.

Two call centers opened in Austin and Midland. Two more, in San Antonio and Athens, will open later. The Midland center also houses the "Document Processing Center" (DPC) — the central mail facility where all applications and documentation will be scanned into the new system. Applicants and clients access the call centers by dialing 2-1-1 (the state's information and referral network) and are offered two choices: 1) if seeking information about and/or referral to local services, they will be connected to local 2-1-1 staff, or 2) if seeking public benefits, they will be automatically directed to the call centers.

Staff at the call centers: 1) screen applicants for expedited food stamps; 2) screen for eligibility for other benefits; 3) screen for disability or domestic violence that might exempt the applicant from TANF or food stamp work requirements; 4) help people fill out an application; 5) collect the verification needed to complete an application, including contacting the applicant for missing information and scheduling face-to-face interviews, if required; 6) provide information about

application status or benefits; and 7) send renewal packets and assemble the information needed to complete the renewal process.

Eventually, all applicants will be able to be screened, fill out and submit an application for food stamps, Medicaid and TANF, check application status, review benefits, renew benefits, or find referrals at www.yourtexasbenefits.com. As of now, families applying for children's Medicaid or CHIP only will be directed to the TexCare Partnership's site, www.texcarepartnership.com.

People may still apply for benefits at a local HHSC office, although there will be fewer of them once the rollout of the new system is complete. In the local office, they will be directed to a "self-service center" and encouraged to apply by phone or on-line in the office. Clients requesting a paper application will be given one and directed to a fax machine in the office, or be given a stamped, addressed envelope to mail the application. Staff are required to assist applicants in using the self-service center, if requested.

Most new food stamp applicants will still be required to have a face-to-face interview and be finger imaged, though there are exemptions for aged and disabled persons and people who cannot get to a local office. Adult Medicaid and TANF applicants will be exempt from the face-to-face interview (as are applicants for Children's Medicaid under the current system), which means TANF applicants will also be exempt from finger imaging.

Expedited applicants do not need to complete the whole application or provide any verification initially; however, they must have a face-to-face interview and finger imaging for benefit approval. Regardless of how they apply, eligible expedited food stamps applicants should be contacted within 24 hours of submitting application to schedule a face-to-face interview and be finger imaged.

Food stamp recipients with a renewal date after February 1 can use the new system to renew their benefits or report a change that affects their

benefits. TANF and Medicaid clients (adult/children's/and aged and disabled) with a renewal date after March 1 can use the new system to renew their benefits or report a change that affects their benefits (renewals for TANF and Medicaid clients with a renewal date before March 1 will be processed in the old system).

No office closures or staffing reductions have occurred yet in conjunction with the rollout, and none are planned until May 2006. At that time, HHSC plans to begin closing offices and reducing eligibility staff incrementally, in conjunction with the geographic rollout of the new system. Eventually, the state plans to close 99 offices.

Nonprofit and community-based organizations working with low-income Texans can help clients transition to the new system by offering:

- an application pick-up or drop-off point, or both,
- a telephone to call 2-1-1,
- a printer to print an application summary from the Internet,
- access to a fax machine to fax applications and required documents,
- access to a computer to apply on-line, or
- general assistance in explaining the application process.

In late April, the new system will roll out in more than 20 Hill Country counties, followed by Bexar County in June. HHSC anticipates completion by December of this year.

HHSC Deputy Executive Commissioner Anne Heiligenstein is conducting a series of community meetings to provide an update on the state's plan. The meetings scheduled for March include:

March 1, 2006 **Harlingen:** 1:30-3:30 p.m. Regional Academic Health Center Auditorium, 2102 Treasure Hills Dr.

March 2, 2006 **Laredo:** 10 a.m. - noon Texas A&M International University Auditorium, 5201 University Blvd.

March 20, 2006 **El Paso:** 1-3 p.m. El Paso Community College Boardroom, 9050 Viscount

March 27, 2006 **Lubbock:** 2-4 p.m. Lubbock Civic Center, 1501 6th St.

More meetings will be posted in the future; see http://www.hhs.state.tx.us/consolidation/IE/meeting_dates.shtml for a schedule.

See the full report at www.cppp.org/files/3/callcenters257final.pdf. Sign up for e-mail updates at www.hhs.state.tx.us/consolidation/IE/IE.shtml.

HELP PROMOTE EITC

In 2003, The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) lifted 4.4 million individuals, including 2.4 million children, out of poverty. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities needs help to spread the word about this powerful anti-poverty tool to eligible workers this tax season.

Full or part-time workers who made less than \$37,000 may be eligible for the EITC. Depending on how much workers earned, whether they were raising children and the number of children who lived with them, they may be able to receive as much as \$4,400 in tax credits. Many families are also eligible for the Child Tax Credit.

Workers must have a valid social security number to get the EITC, and either a social security number or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number to get the Child Tax Credit. In order to receive either benefit, workers must file federal income tax returns even if not required to by law.

Encourage workers to take advantage of free tax filing assistance and avoid commercial preparers and rapid refund services, who charge fees that can cost hundreds of dollars.

For local sites and eligibility for free tax filing assistance, contact the IRS at 800/829-1040 or www.irs.gov. Visit www.cbpp.org/eic2006/index.html for a 2006 tax credit outreach kit.

SAFETY LINKED TO WEIGHT

According to a study in the January issue of the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, children living in neighborhoods their parents believe to be unsafe are more likely to be overweight than those in areas perceived as safe.

Almost 16% of 6- to 11-year-old children in the U.S. are overweight, defined as having a body mass index (BMI) of greater than or equal to the 95th percentile of national norms for age and sex. African-American or Hispanic children, who watch large amounts of television or who have parents with high BMIs are more likely to be overweight, but little is known about how a child's neighborhood affects his or her risks.

Using data collected from 768 children and families participating in the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, a study of families in 10 diverse regions of the U.S., the researchers found that 17% of children living in the first quartile of neighborhoods perceived as least safe by their parents were overweight, compared with 10% in the second quartile, 13% in the third quartile and only 4% of children living in the fourth, safest quartile. This relationship was not affected by any other variables the researchers measured, including education levels or marital status of the children's mothers, racial or ethnic backgrounds or participation in after-school activities.

"In effect, there may well be a relatively simple and straightforward relationship between living in a dangerous neighborhood and overweight; namely, in attempting to protect their children from harm, parents not only decrease the kind of physical activity that comes from playing outdoors in the neighborhood but inadvertently increase the likelihood of sedentary activity that comes from staying indoors," the authors report.

For more information, call JAMA/Archives media relations at 312/464-5262 or e-mail mediarelations@jama-archives.org.

CALENDAR

Apr. 4-6, 2006: Capturing the School Milk Opportunity. Register for free seminars at www.schoolnutrition.org/schoolmilk. Receive valuable tools and information designed to help increase participation in school nutrition programs, boost milk consumption and improve revenues. Texas seminars include:

04/04/06	Dallas, TX
04/05/06	San Antonio, TX
04/06/06	Houston, TX

June 8, 2006: Texas State 4-H Food Show. Texas A&M, College Station. Guidelines are at http://fcs.tamu.edu/food_and_nutrition/4-h_youth.php. Submissions due by 04/24/06.

Sep. 25-26, 2006: Food Safety Education Conference. Adam's Mark Hotel, Denver, CO. Foodborne illness, a preventable and under-reported disease, is a public health and economic challenge affecting both general and at-risk populations. To register, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/denver2006/.

WHAT AMERICA EATS 2006

According to *Food Technology* magazine, three of four American adults eat dinner at home, but only one in three prepare dinner from scratch. Restaurant take-out has overtaken sit-down dining.

In 2005, the average American ate 80 meals at restaurants, a drop of 18% from 1985. But over the same period, the selection of take-home meals rose 72% to 57 meals a year. And while restaurant take-out increased, supermarket take-out is also a force with 42% of adults purchasing supermarket take-out each month — a 12% surge in the past two years.

Other interesting findings:

- The most popular ethnic food remains Italian, but Mexican food gained another 10% of adults naming it their favorite.

- No- and low-fat foods have slimmed to single-digit growth, but it remains a \$32-billion segment — more than twice the size of the organic foods category.
- There are more U.S. Chinese restaurants than McDonald's, Wendy's, and Burger Kings combined.
- Vegetable consumption fell by 2%, but fresh fruit rebounded after 14 years in decline. Fresh fruit is the number one snack of kids aged 2-12.

Food Technology is accessible on-line at www.ift.org/foodtechnology.

- **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**, 01/24/06 p. 3848. This notice updates the HHS poverty guidelines to account for last calendar year's increase in prices as measured by the Consumer Price Index. The effective date is the date of publication, unless an office administering a program using the guidelines specifies a different effective date for that particular program. For general questions about the poverty guidelines, contact Gordon Fisher, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Room 404E, Humphrey Bldg, HHS, Washington, DC 20201; phone 202/690-7507; or visit <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty>.

FEDERAL REGISTER

- **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)**, 01/24/06, p. 3819. This notice informs the public of the annual adjustments to the reimbursement rates for meals served in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The adjustments reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index. Further adjustments are made to reflect higher costs of providing meals in Alaska and Hawaii, as authorized by the Goodling Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 1998. The effective date is 01/01/06. For more information, contact Robert M. Eadie, Branch Chief, Policy and Program Development Branch, Child Nutrition Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Dr., Rm. 640, Alexandria, VA 22302, or phone 703/305-2590.

Maximum per Meal Reimbursement Rates for All States excluding Alaska and Hawaii:

	Operating costs	Administrative costs	
		Rural or self-preparation sites	Other types of sites
Breakfast	\$1.47	\$.1450	\$.1150
Lunch or Supper ...	2.56	.2675	.2225
Supplement59	.0725	.0575

2006 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the DC

Persons in family unit	Poverty Guideline
1	\$9,800
2	13,200
3	16,600
4	20,000
5	23,400
6	26,800
7	30,200
8	33,600

For family units with more than 8 persons, add \$3,400 for each additional person.

- **USDA**, 01/30/06, p. 4892. This notice announces the surplus and purchased commodities USDA expects to make available to states for use in providing nutrition assistance to the needy under the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) in Fiscal Year (FY) 2006. The effective date is 10/01/05. For more information, contact Lillie Ragan, Assistant Branch Chief, Policy Branch, Food Distribution Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Dr., Alexandria, VA 22302 or phone 703/305-2662.



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TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES, INC.
2512 IH 35 South, Suite 100
Austin, Texas 78704-5772
Telephone: (512) 462-2555 or (800) 992-9767
Fax: 512/462-2004
E-Mail: foodjournal@taca.org Web Site: www.taca.org

TACAA STAFF

Stella Rodriguez	Executive Director
Laurie S. Haney	Executive Assistant
Sherrie Fox	Office Manager
Pam Robers	Program Manager
Stephanie Hall	Program Coordinator
Kerrin Meyer	Program Coordinator
Anitra Hendricks	Program Assistant
Gilbert Blanco	Field Representative

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