Move To Gut Food Stamps

The House of Representatives is preparing to vote on a proposal to essentially gut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps).

In early July, House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) released a farm bill (H.R. 2642) that did not include the nutrition title—the section that authorizes SNAP. The House voted 216 to 208 to pass the farm-only farm bill on July 11. Policy analysts with Bread for the World were troubled by this approach to the farm bill, which has historically connected food issues—from farms to tables.

“As the economy slowly rebounds, more than 47 million Americans still depend on SNAP to put food on their tables,” responded Rev. David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World. “Passing a farm bill that only contains farm programs would lead to a nutrition bill with SNAP cuts that far exceed the $20 billion proposed in an earlier House version of the farm bill.” That worst-case scenario surfaced right before Congress adjourned for August recess. On Aug. 1, the House doubled the proposed cut to $40 billion.

The previous proposal of cutting $20 billion from SNAP is equivalent to eliminating half of all the charitable food distribution by churches and food banks over a 10-year period. The legislation that is currently under discussion would double that, substantially increasing the suffering of 47 million Americans who depend on SNAP to keep hunger at bay.

When the House SNAP bill comes to a vote in September we will be telling Congress to reject this legislation. Bread members should contact the representatives in the House and tell them that both proposals are cruel and unacceptable.

Sequestration Is Wreaking Havoc on the Appropriations Process

As Congress went into recess, most appropriations bills had been passed through committee, but few had passed in the full chambers. The House has yet to mark up the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations bill, and House leadership pulled the Transportation Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill shortly before its scheduled vote. Many speculate this is because the cuts are so deep that House Republicans are concerned about detailing the extent of these spending cuts to social programs.
The 2014 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations (SFOP) bill passed through the full House and Senate appropriations committees during the final week of July. The House bill set funding at $40.6 billion, but the Senate used a post-sequestration number of $50.6 billion. With higher levels of funding, the Senate version protected more poverty-focused foreign assistance than did the House. Both bills protected many global health programs through USAID, President’s Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) provided more funds for humanitarian accounts like International Disaster Assistance (42% above the House).

“The House’s version of the State and Foreign Operations bill demonstrates why Congress must replace sequestration with a balanced plan,” said Rev. David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World. “Because of the across-the-board cuts of sequestration, we are seeing shameful proposals that threaten to undermine the significant progress against hunger that the world has achieved since 2000.”

“By continuing to implement sequestration rules and prioritize defense appropriations, the House committee bill puts hungry and poor people at greater risk. We must let Congress know that we should not balance the budget on the backs of poor people,” Beckmann concluded.

We anticipate an intense fall—including a government shutdown fight. If Congress decides to continue sequestration, Bread for the World members will need to pay attention to whether lawmakers shift defense cuts to nondefense programs, such as anti-poverty programs. Bread members will also need to be alert about attempts to replace sequestration with a deal that does not include new revenue. In such a scenario, Medicare and SNAP are the two programs with the largest targets for cuts.

Bread Urges the Continuation of Anti-Hunger Credits in Tax Reform Legislation

July 26 was the deadline for senators to submit letters concerning a proposal by Sens. Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) to approach tax reform with a blank slate. This would reset the tax code, eliminating deductions or exclusions.

Bread for the World sent a letter with a number of other faith groups urging senators to push for revenue-positive tax reform to pay for anti-hunger initiatives in any tax reform legislation.
Bread also urged senators protecting the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit.

Global Food Security Act Could Significantly Improve Food Sustainability

Reps. Betty McCollum (D-Minn.), Aaron Schock (R-Ill.) and James McGovern (D-Mass.) introduced the Global Food Security Act (H.R. 2822) on July 25. This important bill renews the nation's commitment to helping poor countries grow their way out of poverty and overcome hunger. This bill would ensure that smallholder farmers in the world's poorest countries, particularly women, have the tools, education, and training they need to produce food for their families, communities, and countries.

If passed, this bill will authorize a long-term commitment to fight hunger, strengthen agricultural production, and give hundreds of millions of children and families food security so they can grow, develop, and learn.

September Busy Time

September is gearing up to be a very busy time for anti-hunger advocates. With no budget, sequestration, debt ceiling and possible government shutdown this is not the time to be uninvolved.

This issue of Bread for the World Louisiana gives some information of the magnitude of the important issues before the Congress. Poor and hungry people no matter where they live are depending on people of faith to speak for them and their families. To care for one another is a sacred trust placed upon us, “You give them something to eat.” Mark 6:34-44.