



Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

Write Here! Write Now! April 2018

ISSUE: Protect SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), formerly known as food stamps, from cuts and harmful changes

www.uusj.org click on Advocacy for Issue Action Information
advocacy@uusj.org 703-786-5206 or 202-600-9132

Time period: Send PDF/emails to advocacy@uusj.org by Monday, April 9, 2018 12:00pm ET

Instructions for Writing Your Letter

- **Focus on the topic** - SNAP is our nation's most effective anti-hunger program. It puts food on the table for more than 40 million low-income children, elderly, and disabled adults. Let's create jobs and boost wages instead of punishing people that are already facing economic hardship.
- **Be original and speak from the heart.** If possible describe a personal experience or story, or include 1-2 talking points (on page 2), **in your own words**, to support the main message.
- **Include a clear and specific action request.** "I urge you to..."
- Include your name and **complete mailing address** - proves that you are a constituent.
- **Send us your letters we deliver them:** All letters must arrive by 12 noon on Monday, April 9. For a mailing address contact us; if you **PDF/scan and email** letters send to advocacy@uusj.org. **In**

Sample Letter

Today's date

Dear Representative _____, [name of your US Representative]

I am a Unitarian Universalist from [optional: name of congregation and location].

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) keeps members of my community from going hungry. Nationwide, it ensures 40 million children, and elderly and disabled adults are able to buy groceries and have food on their tables and enjoy a decent standard of living.

I urge you to support fair-minded initiatives that strengthen SNAP, and which create jobs and boost wages, rather than punish people already dealing with economic hardship. Don't support proposed additional work and training requirements that could cause SNAP recipients to lose benefits. Farmers need the certainty that the Farm Bill provides, and hungry Americans need to know they can feed their families. It's wrong to put people already facing economic hardship at further risk. Please speak out and provide moral leadership on this important issue.

[Insert personal experience, story, concern, or pick 1-2 talking points (page 2), in your own words, to support the main message.]

[Insert personal wrap up sentence such as "Thank you for your consideration of my [concerns/story]. I look forward to your response. etc.]

Sincerely,
YOUR NAME and **COMPLETE ADDRESS**

(See other side for Background, Talking Points and Key Messages)

Background & UU Grounding

Background: SNAP, part of the Farm Bill, accounts for 80 percent of farm bill spending. The Farm Bill is renewed every five years and is up for reauthorization by Sept. 20. It includes food and agriculture programs such as crop insurance, subsidies and rural development. This year the Farm Bill is seen by fiscal conservatives as a way to impose their welfare reform agenda and cut spending on this popular program by adding stricter work requirements, time limits, and administrative burdens.

Historically, Farm Bills have been reauthorized with bipartisan support, thanks to the urban-rural coalition of lawmakers and advocates who support both SNAP and agriculture programs. However, the House Agriculture Committee Chair may pursue a partisan Farm Bill by considering new limits and requirements which would threaten the likelihood of passage. The Senate has signaled that it would not consider major changes to SNAP. The House bill details have been kept very close, but could cause large numbers of recipients to lose benefits.

In the last few Farm Bill cycles, the House and Senate have passed their own versions (which are written by the respective Agriculture Committees), and must then reconcile their differences and pass one identical version. We are visiting House offices since we expect the House Agriculture Committee to move first.

UU Grounding: UUs have passed two Statements of Conscience, [Ethical Eating: Food & Environmental Justice](#) (2011) and [Escalating Economic Inequity](#) (2017) that are directly relevant to this issue with calls to support the reduction of hunger.

Key Message, Facts and Talking Points

Key Messages:

SNAP is our nation's most effective anti-hunger program. It is a sound investment with respect to health as well as long-term education and employment. Strengthening, not cutting, SNAP is the right pathway forward.

Facts and Talking Points:

- **Work rates are high among SNAP households that can work.** More than half of SNAP households with at least one working-age, non-disabled adult work while receiving SNAP. Work rates are even higher for families with children: more than 60 percent work while receiving SNAP.
- **SNAP keeps people working.** SNAP supplements the income of workers in low-paying jobs, smoothes out income fluctuations due to irregular hours, and helps workers when they are between jobs, enabling them to stay employed.
- **SNAP is a strong public-private partnership.** SNAP benefits are spent at more than 250,000 grocers and local food retailers around the country, including farmers' markets.
- **SNAP keeps people healthy.** SNAP is linked with reduced health care costs because it reduces food insecurity. And SNAP's impact on children can last a lifetime. Research shows that adults who received food stamps as young children are more likely to graduate from high school and become economically self-sufficient, and have reduced health problems later in life..
- **SNAP is efficient.** Out of all public benefit programs, SNAP has one of the most rigorous systems to determine eligibility upfront. As a result, SNAP also has a low error rate, meaning that the vast majority of SNAP benefits are issued correctly to eligible households.
- **The overwhelming majority of SNAP participants are children, seniors, or people with disabilities.** Close to half of all participants are children, and over half of all non-elderly, non-disabled adult participants live with children.

(See other side for writing instructions and sample letter)