



Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

Write Here! Write Now! **June 2018** (updated from April 2018 focus on House)

ISSUE: Protect SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), formerly known as food stamps - focus on the Senate

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, June 11, 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 via email:** All letters must arrive by 12 noon on Monday, June 11. **PDF/scan and email** letters send to advocacy@uusj.org with the subject line: WHWN, name of your congregation and state.

Sample Letter

(as much as possible, use your own words)

Today's date

Dear Senator _____ [name of your Senator],

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

I appreciate the Senate's effort to produce a bipartisan Farm Bill. I urge you to ensure that the Farm Bill protects SNAP and the millions of Americans who must rely on it. Let's honor the dignity of every person, especially those that are struggling. No matter a person's circumstance, no one deserves to be hungry.

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 by adding onerous new work requirements and administrative barriers. Please speak out and provide moral leadership on this vital 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: On May 18, the House of Representatives voted down H.R. 2, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 (the House Farm Bill) by a vote of 198-238. This highly-partisan bill would have caused more than 2 million Americans to see their SNAP benefits cut or eliminated. Also, it would have implemented even stricter work requirements, locking people out of the program if they couldn't comply.

The Senate Agriculture Committee will vote on its version of the Farm Bill as soon as Wednesday, June 13. Senate Majority Leader McConnell has promised a full Senate vote before July 4.

About 80% of the Farm Bill budget deals with SNAP. Nationwide, SNAP 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.

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. Unlike the House bill, the Senate version does not include major changes to SNAP and has been a bipartisan effort.

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 already 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 income of workers in low-paying jobs, smoothes out income fluctuations due to irregular hours, and helps workers when they are between jobs.
- **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 benefits to 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)