

Dear Chairman Kohl, Senator Cochran, Chairwoman DeLauro and Representative Kingston:

We write in strong support of restoring funding for the commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). We are grateful that you have acted to preserve the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) for FY08. Thank you for your support of this effective, much-relied upon program, which provides monthly food packages to hundreds of thousands of needy seniors, mothers, and children. The Administration has proposed eliminating all funding for this vital food and nutrition program again in its FY09 budget. We believe that the Administration's decision to not fund this program will seriously impact the health and well being of some of our Nation's most vulnerable citizens.

In 2008, the CSFP will provide 5.7 million food packages to more than 473,000 low income seniors, mothers, infants and children throughout the nation, utilizing a grassroots delivery and support system of more than 150 community and faith based organizations at 1,800 sites. CSFP operates in 32 states, the District of Columbia and two Native American reservations (Red Lake MN and Oglala Sioux, SD) in a unique partnership between federal/state and public/private efforts. In this partnership, participants also received many other locally donated benefits such as fresh produce, frozen and perishable foods, flu shots, tax return services, health screenings, personal care items and much more. Additionally there are currently 5 states with approved state plans that have been waiting years to be added to this program, but lack of funding has prevented them from doing so.

Seniors who have income at or below 130% of the federal poverty rate and pregnant and post-partum women with infants and children age six and younger (not enrolled on WIC) with incomes at 185% of the federal poverty rate are eligible for CSFP. These are among the most vulnerable of all Americans and the more than \$50.00 worth of nutritious foods provided monthly through CSFP is a vital life line for participants while costing the USDA an average of only \$18.57. This targeted nutrition saves health care dollars spent on our seniors while helping them to remain living independently and for our children, a healthy diet is critical to all phases of their future development and wellness.

As Governors, we understand the need to balance fiscal responsibility with good public policy. We can think of no better policy than to continue programs like the CSFP that provide the most basic needs to a critical, at risk segment of our population in a very cost effective model. The small investment made in CSFP provides incalculable benefits long term and therefore continuing funding also makes good fiscal sense.

We respectfully request that your Committees restore funding again for the CSFP and thank you for your attention to this matter.

Please contact Governor Bill Richardson to join in support of CSFP:

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