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THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM IN ARKANSAS

The Food Stamp Program has made severe hunger rare in America. In the late 1960s, medical research exposed the fact that American children suffered and died from diseases related to severe malnutrition that usually are thought of as occurring only in third-world countries. In 1979, after the Food Stamp Program became available nation-wide, physicians discovered that this severe malnutrition had become rare, a result they attributed to the Food Stamp Program. The Food Stamp Program is the largest anti-hunger program in Arkansas.

FOOD STAMPS HELP VULNERABLE STATE RESIDENTS AND THE ECONOMY

- 384,889 Arkansans use food stamps to buy food every month. That amounts to 13.7 percent of the people in Arkansas.
- In Arkansas food stamp households receive, on average, \$1.00 per person, per meal in food stamp benefits. This modest amount is crucial to financially pressed families.
- The Food Stamp Program pumped \$414,384,306 into the Arkansas's economy last year, benefiting farmers, grocers, and small businesses throughout the state.
- About 80 percent of food stamp benefits go to households with children, many of them in working families. Most of the rest go to households containing elderly people or people with disabilities.

FOOD STAMPS HELP PEOPLE THROUGH HARD TIMES

- During the recent recession and subsequent weak recovery, Food Stamp Program participation in Arkansas increased. In 2000, an average of 246,572 Arkansans received food stamps each month. That number rose steadily to 384,889 in 2006, an increase of 56.1 percent.
 - Using the flexibility provided in the Food Stamp Act, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was able to quickly issue \$907 million in disaster food stamps to 2.2 million households that survived Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma last year. Arkansas alone, received \$4,452,499 in disaster food stamps benefit following Hurricane Katrina.
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UNMET NEED REMAINS

- Still, about 35 million Americans, including nearly one in five American children, have difficulty affording food. An estimated 162,000 households in Arkansas live with hunger or the threat of hunger, according to USDA. That includes low-income working families and senior citizens living on fixed incomes.
- Nationally, only 60 percent of those eligible for food stamps receive them. In Arkansas, the participation rate is estimated to be 68 percent.
- Increasing the share of eligible households that participate in the Food Stamp Program by just five percentage points, Arkansas would provide food stamps to an additional 25,000 low-income Arkansans, bring \$15,900,000 into Arkansas's local economy, and result in \$29,300,000 in new economic activity.