



WITNESS TOOLKIT

Advocate | Volunteer | Witness

"We are called to address those who despoil the lives of our brothers and sisters. Advocacy in areas of public policy can seem overwhelming, but perhaps it is the avenue of the most help."¹

- ADVOCATE -

Through political action, United Methodists of Arkansas can significantly reduce childhood hunger with long-term solutions through advocating for those who are hungry.

To help eradicate hunger, it is important to watch for legislation that could have an impact on programs that serve the hungry, and to encourage new programs.

Of course, every food assistance program requires funds, and this money comes directly from state legislation or district policy. With dwindling public funds available, it becomes even more imperative to be sure programs are running efficiently. To assure that funds are being spent wisely, the **National Commission on Hunger** was appointed in 2014 to reform food assistance programs, specifically looking at ways to increase food security. (Follow their activity at <https://HungerCommission.RTI.Org> or #NatlCommHunger.)

The **Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 / Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act** is the major source of funding for food assistance programs. The legislation was up for reauthorization in September, 2015. As of late November of 2015, it had still not been reauthorized. This critical legislation funds all federal nutrition programs which affect children including those listed below.

➤ **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**

There are currently 2 bills that have been introduced to expand the CACFP to increase the number of children the program serves. The *Access to Healthy Food for Young Children Act* was introduced in the Senate in the summer of 2015, and the *Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act* was introduced in the House of Representatives in the fall of 2015.

➤ **Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program (FFVP)**

The *Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008* established the FFVP as a permanent federally assisted program that provides free fresh fruits and vegetables to students in participating elementary schools during the school day. The program is administered by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) within the USDA.

¹ Eberhart, Elaine, *Disciplines 2015* (Upper Room Books, 2014)

➤ **National School Lunch Program (NSLP)**

The NSLP is a federally assisted meal program that was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946. Although the program has been permanently authorized by Congress, its regulations are updated every five years under the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act. Regulation changes have the ability to seriously impact the program's effectiveness and reach.

➤ **School Breakfast Program (SBP)**

"Students who eat school breakfast are more likely to perform better on tests, attend more days of school, and graduate from high school."²

Studies have proven that children who eat breakfast have an increased chance of academic success, but many children do not have access to food in the morning. Local school districts across the county have taken steps to increase participation in SBP by providing breakfast free to all students or through new **Breakfast After the Bell** models such as *Breakfast in the Classroom*, *Grab & Go Breakfast*, or *Second Chance*. Funding is required to implement these programs, and funding for this program comes directly from state legislation or district policy.

In Arkansas, over 400 schools have implemented *Breakfast After the Bell* programs with the help of the **Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance**. In testimony to the *National Commission on Hunger* in Little Rock in May 2015, Representative Charlotte Vining Douglas (R-75) shared the success of the program as well as results such as higher attendance, concentration, and health of the students who participate in the program.

To learn how different areas in the country have implemented a school breakfast program, see:

- [Breakfast Policy Solutions.pdf](#)

For various policy options that affect the SBP, see:

- [SBP Policy Report.pdf](#)

➤ **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)**

WIC is a public health nutrition program under the jurisdiction of the. WIC is a domestic discretionary program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and funded annually through the U.S. Senate and House Appropriations Committee. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) drafts WIC's annual budget proposal and submits it to Congress. Once the appropriation passes Congress and is signed into law, grants are provided to each state, and administered at the local level by county and city health centers, or private nonprofits. To stay up to date on funding for this program, go to the **National WIC Association** at www.NWICA.Org.

➤ **Summer Food Service Program**

Only 1 out of 5 children eligible for food assistance when school is not in session are receiving help from this USDA program. Proposed changes to the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act* seek to remedy the problems of lack of transportation to meal sites, regulatory requirements that make it difficult for sites to operate, and the distribution to impoverished areas across the state.

² <https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/school-breakfast/school-breakfast-policy-0>

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LEGISLATION

Pending Legislation: Legislation can take a long time to get through the House and Senate, and normally the final version has been amended at least once. For example, H.R. 644 *Americans Give More Act* would expand the tax deduction for citizens who donate food to pantries. It passed the House in July, 2014 with amendments and was sent to the Senate. As of June, 2015 the Senate was insisting on another amendment to the bill. At the end of Nov., 2015 the bill had still not passed the Senate.

To track pending legislation, try **GovTrack** (www.GovTrack.U.S). This site allows you to search for legislation, read the bill, see what action has been taken, and sign-up for email alerts on a bill. As of late 2015, pending legislation affecting hunger programs includes:

Bill	Date	Senate#	House #	Purpose
Access to Healthy Food for Young Children Act of 2015	July 2015	S. 1833		Expands and strengthens the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) so more children have access to nutritious food.
Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act	Nov. 2015		H.R. 3886	Expands and strengthens the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) so more children have access to nutritious food.
Farm to School Act of 2015	Feb. 2015	S. 569	H.R. 1061	Continues and expands the Farm to School for summer, afterschool, and childcare providers.
Global Food Security Act	Mar. 2015	S. 1252	H.R. 1567	Seeks to establish a comprehensive strategy on hunger and malnutrition both domestic and abroad.
Hunger Free Summer for Kids Act of 2015	Aug. 2015	S. 1966		Would strengthen summer feeding programs by providing states with new program models to reach un-served children.
Improving School Nutrition Training Act	Oct. 2015		H.R. 3817	Encourages professional training for school food service employees be conducted during regular work hours and ensures compensation for after-hours training.
School Food Modernization Act of 2015	Feb. & July 2015	S. 540	H.R. 3316	Improves the ability of schools to serve nutritious and appealing food by helping them purchase kitchen equipment, as well as providing training to personnel.
Summer Meals Act of 2015	Feb. & Mar. 2015	S. 613	H.R. 1728	Enhances efforts to expand the reach of the Summer Food Program to low-income children and simplify its administration.
Stop Child Summer Hunger Act of 2015	June 2015	S. 1539	H.R. 2715	Provides low-income families with children an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card for the summer to purchase food.
Tribal Nutrition Improvement Act of 2015	Aug. & Sep. 2015	S. 1937	H.R. 3502	Improves access to free meals for Native students who attend school on or near a reservation and allows tribal governments to administer child nutrition programs.

Arkansas Legislation: The *Healthy Active Arkansas Plan* was put forth by Governor Asa Hutchinson as a 10-year plan to fight obesity and increase the health of children and families in October, 2015. Specifically, the plan commits to

- Increasing the School Breakfast Program
- Using nutrition education programs such as Cooking Matters, Cooking Matters at the Store and SNAP education programs
- Increasing the amount of fresh fruits and vegetables that are purchased for food assistance programs
- Using more gleaned food from local growers

Needed Legislation: The *USDA Commodity Distribution Program* is a crucial component in the war on hunger. However, the cost of the actual distribution of the food is higher than the funding received to cover it leaving food banks with a financial burden. Congressional action is needed to address this problem. **Lower food prices** have a direct positive impact on reducing hunger. Advocating for large-scale food retailers in low-income areas and abolishment of sales tax on food leads to higher food security rates.

Policy Change: There are several key sites that can help you stay current on legislative issues that affect hunger.

- The **Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)** is a good site to watch for vital upcoming legislation and take action to get your voice heard. Visit <http://FRAC.Org/Leg-Act-Center/Bill-We-Are-Watching>.
- **Bread for the World** is another organization that works for policy change (www.Bread.Org/Policy-Change). With a strong presence in Washington D.C., Bread for the World focuses on hunger issues here and abroad. With one in seven Americans unsure of where their next meal is coming from, Bread for the World wants Congress to take steps to end hunger in the U.S. by 2030. The *2014 Hunger Report* outlines their plan.
 - [Bread Hunger Report.pdf](#)
- The **Center for Hunger-Free Communities** conducts research on hunger in America to present a strong case to Congress for change. One project they have undertaken is *Witnesses to Hunger*. Families in poverty are given cameras and asked to take pictures of what hunger means to them. These pictures are then shown to Congress. The pictures are dramatic and moving. For more information, visit their website at www.CenterForHungerFreeCommunities.Org/Our-Projects/Witnesses-Hunger or read their report.
 - [Witness to Hunger.pdf](#)

Legislative change happens when citizens get involved. Here are two ways to get involved:

1. Contact your local representatives in the Arkansas Legislature. Go to www.ArkansasHouse.Org/About-the-House/District-Map to find out who your representatives are. Demand that eradication of childhood hunger in Arkansas become a high priority.
2. Join the 200KReasons Public Witness Team. Contact Rev. Stephen Copley at (501) 626-9220 or by email at interfaithark@aol.com.

- VOLUNTEER -

Many non-profit agencies rely on volunteers to help them succeed. Find time in your schedule to help a feeding organization in your area. Some important agencies located in Central Arkansas are:

Arkansas Foodbank

4301 West 65th St.
Little Rock, AR 72209

Phone: (501) 565-8121
www.ArkansasFoodbank.Org



Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance

1400 W. Markham St., Ste. 304
Little Rock, AR 72201

Phone: (501) 399-3999
www.ARHungerAlliance.Org



Don't forget your local food pantries or food banks. There are hundreds of agencies across the state. Find one near you using our guide.

- [200KReasons Arkansas Food Resource Directory](#)

- WITNESS -

Some people have a lack of knowledge about available assistance programs. You can help to increase participation in food assistance avenues by raising awareness of these and other programs in your congregation and local area.

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM (NSLP)

Currently, out of the 17 million children eligible to participate in NSLP, only 2 million children are enrolled.³ Only 11% of those children who could receive food at school actually do so.

A study conducted by the Institute of Child Nutrition⁴ among high school students found that the use of on-campus vending machines or off-campus options negatively impacted participation in the school lunch program. The most common foods consumed off-campus were hamburgers and pizzas, and on-campus vending machines mostly provide junk food with little nutrition. When students were asked to name one thing that would encourage them to eat the school lunch, they cited an increase in variety and choice. Another problem cited by student which discouraged them from eating the school lunch, was long lines to

³ Craig Gunderson, *Addressing U.S. Food Insecurity* (ConAgra Foods Foundation, 2012).

⁴ <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20080313014626.pdf>

purchase the school lunch which left them little time to eat.

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) has also studied participation in NSLP. This organization also cited competition from on-campus vending machines and off-campus food options as one reason why participation in the program is low. Read their report titled "*National School Lunch Program: Trends and Factors Affecting Student Participation*" for more information on their study.

- [FRAC School Lunch Report.pdf](#)

Here are a few things you can do to encourage participation in the NSLP:

1. Encourage parents to apply for the program. A few ideas from the Arizona Department of Education include:⁵
 - Work with the PTO on ideas for encouraging participation.
 - Offer prizes at a classroom level for the highest submission of applications (e.g., gas cards).
 - Have a 'banquet' night for all families that submit an application such as a Spaghetti and Meatball night.
 - Give parents a free lunch 'date' with their child when they turn in their application.
2. Remove options that compete with NSLP.
 - Petition the school board to remove vending machines which offer non-nutritious food choices.
 - Remove off-campus lunch options. Not only do they give students the ability to easily obtain food with poor nutritional content, but allowing students to come and go during the school day may present security issues.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

SNAP took the place of the old "Food Stamp" program. Now, families receive their benefit in the form of an electronic benefits transfer "EBT" card that works like a debit card. According to Craig Gunderson, increasing participation in SNAP is the number one thing that can be done to alleviate hunger in America.²

About 20% of people eligible for SNAP do not receive benefits.⁶ Most say they are unable to get to a DHS office to apply, or that DHS is understaffed and it takes too long to apply. If you have a computer and access to the internet, you can become a SNAP Application site, providing people with the ability to easily apply for SNAP benefits on-line. To become a member of the **Benefit Bank of Arkansas**, contact the **Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) / Division of County Operations** - www.Medicaid.State.AR.US.

Learn what it is like to live on SNAP. Take the SNAP Challenge, then post your experience on-line.

- [Arkansas UMC SNAP Challenge](#)

⁵ <https://www.azed.gov/health-nutrition/files/2012/03/tips-for-increasing-participation-in-the-nslp-sy2013.pdf>

⁶ <http://frac.org/reports-and-resources/snapfood-stamp-monthly-participation-data/>

USDA SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM (SFSP)

"Promoting summer feeding sites in your community is one of the most important things you can do to ensure no child goes hungry this summer. The more parents, children, and teenagers know about where sites are located, the more children will come to eat." ⁷ The USDA provides a wide variety of resources to help you raise awareness including flyers and bookmarks to hand out and sample posts for Facebook.

- Find resources to raise awareness at: www.FNS.USDA.Gov/SFSP/Raise-Aawareness
- To find out where the summer meal sites in your area are, visit: www.FNS.USDA.Gov/SummerFoodRocks
- For more information on the SFSP, see: www.FNS.USDA.GOV/SFSP/Summer-Food-Service-Program-SFSP

- INTERNET RESOURCES -

*There is a wealth of information available to help you
WITNESS about hunger
such as these 200KReasons Recommended Websites*

ARKANSAS FOODBANK: www.ArkansasFoodbank.Org

200KReasons Toolkit: **Witness**

Keywords: **Volunteer**

Their mission is to be a cornerstone of hunger relief that acquires and distributes, through local and national partnerships, large quantities of food and other resources to hungry people.

ARKANSAS HUNGER RELIEF ALLIANCE: www.ARHungerAlliance.Org

200KReasons Toolkit: **Garden, Provide, Teach, Witness**

Keywords: **Advocacy, Cooking Matters, Food Pantries, Garden Resources**

The mission of this agency is to reduce food insecurity in Arkansas through direct hunger relief, education and advocacy. They assist with starting a garden, provide food, help agencies start **Cooking Matters** classes. To download a copy of "**Organizing and Operating a Food Pantry**", go to www.ARHungerAlliance.Org/Get-Involved/Advocate.

ARKANSAS LEGISLATORS: www.ArkansasHouse.Org

200KReasons Toolkit: **Witness**

Keywords: **Advocate**

At www.ArkansasHouse.Org/About-the-House/District-Map, local senators and representatives are provided based on an address given.

⁷ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/raise-awareness>

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BREAD FOR THE WORLD: www.Bread.Org/Policy-Change

200KReasons Toolkit: **Witness**

Keywords: **Advocate**

This organization lobbies Congress on issues that affect hunger and malnutrition.

CENTER FOR HUNGER-FREE COMMUNITIES: www.CenterForHungerFreeCommunities.Org

200KReasons Toolkit: **Witness**

Keywords: **Advocate**

The organization conducts research on hunger in America. For information on their *Witnesses to Hunger* project, visit www.CenterForHungerFreeCommunities.Org/Our-Projects/Witnesses-Hunger.

FOOD RESEARCH AND ACTION CENTER (FRAC): <http://FRAC.Org>

200KReasons Toolkit: **Witness**

Keywords: **Advocate**

To search for pending legislation on hunger issues, visit <http://FRAC.Org/Leg-Act-Center/Bill-We-Are-Watching>.

GOVTRACK: www.GovTrack.us This site allows you to search for legislation, read

200KReasons Toolkit: **Witness**

Keywords: **Advocate**

Search for bills, read the bill, see what actions have been taken, and sign-up for alerts.

INSTITUTE OF CHILD NUTRITION: www.NFSMI.Org

200KReasons Toolkit: **Witness**

Keywords: **Witness**

The institute conducts studies on food assistance programs as well as provides training to food service personnel.

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON HUNGER: <http://HungerCommission.RTI.Org>

200KReasons Toolkit: **Witness**

Keywords: **Advocate**

A 10 member bi-partisan committee that seeks to find ways to make federal food assistance programs more effective.

NATIONAL WIC ASSOCIATION: www.NWICA.Org

200KReasons Toolkit: **Witness**

Keywords: **Witness**

The organization keeps up with funding or other issues that affect the WIC program.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE - SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM (SFSP): www.FNS.USDA.Gov/SFSP/Summer-Food-Service-Program-SFSP

200KReasons Toolkit: **Witness**

Keywords: **Witness**

To get resources to raise awareness of the SFSP, see: www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/raise-awareness. To find out where the summer meal sites in your area are, visit: www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks

Download the complete list:

- **200KReasons Recommended Websites.pdf**

All Referenced files are available for download on the website or are included in the Toolkit.

For more information, email **200KReasons@arumc.org**
or visit our website **www.200KReasons.arumc.org**.

