



Federal Farm Bill Update

June 5, 2018

Every 4 years, the [Farm Bill](#) is reauthorized in Congress. In anticipation of this effort, the House Agriculture Committee held several dozen hearings in 2017 and early 2018. This bill is important to low-income Americans because it includes the authorization for one of the largest social safety net programs, the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#), known as [CalFresh in California](#).

Anticipating the 2018 debate, the Trump Administration issued a set of [Farm Bill Principles](#). In contrast, California Anti-Hunger Advocates issued [this letter of principles](#) for the Farm Bill prior to the debate.

In March, the House introduced [H.R. 2 – the 2018 Farm Bill](#). It passed out of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture on April 18, 2018. In May, the bill failed on the floor with all Democrats voting against it because of its cuts to SNAP. H.R. 2, if enacted, would erect new red-tape barriers to providing vital food assistance for the nearly 4 million California SNAP recipients who need it most and who live in [every California Congressional District](#). For more on this, see [Western Center’s position paper on the bill](#) or our [more detailed paper on the impact](#).

In Summary, H.R. 2 cuts over \$20 billion in benefits in 10 years by making changes to SNAP program eligibility and verification rules. These proposed cuts would eclipse those made in the 2014 Farm Bill and reverse many of the program efficiencies achieved by prior farm bills. While H.R. 2 proposes to reinvest some of the savings scored by food aid cuts into the SNAP, Employment and Training (E&T) Program to help people exit poverty, it does so by creating a new state mandate which is significantly underfunded to achieve this goal and, thus, cannot be expected to have a meaningful impact on increasing work participation among low-income Americans. Finally, H.R. 2 advances some helpful new policies that will protect low-income Americans against the demoralizing experience of hunger and the long-term consequences of hunger, but these modest investments will not make up the difference from the much larger cuts made and will have little impact on reducing hunger in California because they are duplicative of policies already adopted by our state’s CalFresh program.

The Senate Agriculture Committee Leadership has stated that they will not take up the House version of the bill, but instead will mark up their own Farm Bill. Just yesterday, the Senate Ag. Chairman said he hopes the markup will be on June 13th and that the bill is expected to be heard on the floor shortly after that.

California has been especially united against cuts to SNAP in the Farm Bill and, instead, has been calling for increased investments. Below are links to several letters and resolutions from Californians:

- Over 100 organizations [signed on in opposition to the House Farm Bill](#).
- Several CA Mayors signed this [bipartisan mayors](#) urge Congress to not “impose cuts and new requirements [in the Farm Bill] that would punish those already struggling to make ends meet.”
- The [California Legislature](#) asks California's Congressional Delegation "to reject all proposals in the House farm bill that would result in reduced food assistance and weaker environmental protections to Californians.”
- The [California Department of Agriculture, California Environmental Protection Agency, California Natural Resources Agency, and California Health & Human Services Agency](#) letter to Senate and House Ag Committee leadership provides recommendations for the 2018 Farm Bill, including robust funding for domestic food and nutrition programs. The letter also urges that the structure of SNAP be maintained so that it stays responsive to economic changes and can adequately support Californians in need.
- The [County Welfare Directors Association of California](#) has joined with the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and County Health Executives Association of California (CHEAC) to oppose provisions in the House Farm Bill, H.R. 2, that would reduce eligibility and cut benefits to needy families who rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known as CalFresh in California.
- The [Alameda County letter](#) contains signatures of elected representatives from cities and communities across Alameda County, and urges support of CalFresh/SNAP, and opposes any cuts to benefits, limits on eligibility, and efforts to block grant the SNAP program.
- The [Marin County Board of Supervisors letter](#) outlines the importance of SNAP/CalFresh for residents of Marin County and the state of California and urges Representatives from California on the House Agriculture Committee to defend and strengthen SNAP.
- On May 29, 2018, the [Los Angeles City Council passed a resolution 15 to 0](#) to oppose any Farm Bill that cuts SNAP and LA Board of Supervisor [Sheila Keuhl has issued a statement](#) about the impact on Seniors and the LGBTQ community.

For more information about Western Center’s Anti-Hunger Priorities for Federal Lawmakers, go to www.wclp.org or contact Jessica Bartholow at jbartholow@wclp.org