

November 8, 2019

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### **Potential Government Shutdown**

Funding for the federal government expires on November 21, which means unless Congress passes and the President signs into law a Continuing Resolution or Appropriations bills, all branches of the federal government would shut down on November 22. Currently, none of the 12 annual appropriations bills have been enacted, meaning a shutdown would affect the entire federal government, unlike the partial government shutdown we experienced in December and January.

The current climate in Washington makes it especially difficult to predict the outcome of negotiations to keep the government open beyond November 21. However, public comments from both sides of the aisle, including the White House, have suggested that none are wanting to take shutdown action. Feeding America is monitoring the situation and is preparing resources to respond to a potential shutdown and to advocate to keep the government open. Having gone through the partial shutdown earlier this year, preparation is underway utilizing lessons learned. As we move toward the critical November 21 date, we will keep everyone updated.

### **Agriculture Appropriations Measure Approved by Full Senate**

The Senate last week passed its version of the Agriculture Appropriations bill, clearing the way for the legislation to move to a conference committee to reconcile differences between the House and Senate bills. Due in large part to the network's advocacy earlier this year, the TEFAP Storage and Distribution account is funded at \$79.6 million in both versions of the measure and the CSFP program is slated to receive \$245 million in each of the respective bills. Mid-Ohio Foodbank joined food banks nationally in stressing to Congress the importance of increasing TEFAP Storage and Distribution, especially considering the recently-announced second round of Trade Mitigation foods, resulting in additional funding for storage and distribution. We will keep you posted on developments.

However, other vital agencies, such as Health and Human Services (HHS), continue in limbo as their funding bills languish. As noted in the "Potential Government Shutdown" article, it is difficult to predict what, if any, of the spending bills may be enacted in a timely manner.

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### **SNAP Photo ID Bill Moving**

Senate Bill 165 was introduced by Senator Tim Schaffer (R-Lancaster) to require photos be placed on SNAP/Food Assistance Cards. Last week it was amended and voted out of the Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee. No date has been set for floor consideration. The amendment extends the rule-making time period to a year, to address implementation concerns raised during hearings. This bill seeks to establish requirements for electronic benefit transfer cards issued under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to have a picture of an adult member for any recipients. While the amendment allows greater time to address logistical concerns, it does not change that the bill will cause hardship on SNAP recipients. It does raise the question as to why a photo ID would be required for one federal program, but not others; such isolated requirements only add hurdles and stigmatization for our struggling neighbors. The [Letter-to-the-Editor](#) Mid-Ohio Foodbank CEO Matt Habash wrote nearly two years ago still holds true. We will keep you posted on SB165.

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### **SNAP Eligibility Rule Proposal Data Release**

A surprise release of [data](#) that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) should have disclosed earlier underscores the deep harm of its proposal to limit access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): eliminating food assistance for 3.1 million people and jeopardizing free school meals for nearly 1 million children. Children who live in households that receive SNAP benefits are directly certified (automatically eligible) to receive free school breakfast and lunch. The initial estimate showed that the redefined standards in the proposed rule could jeopardize more than 500,000 children's access to free



school meals. The new USDA analysis states that as many as 982,000 children could be impacted, further straining the nation's food relief system. The extended comment period has ended and the next step is for USDA to either implement the rule or revised and resubmit it. One in four children in the Foodbank's footprint does not know where their next meal will come from – this proposed rule change will significantly impact our communities' children and their ability to learn and thrive.

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### **SNAP Utility Allowance Rule Proposal Comment Period Is Open**

USDA's proposed rule on SNAP Standardization of State Heating and Cooling Standard Utility Allowances would cut program benefits by a total of \$4.5 billion over five years. This cut would result from changes in how states take households' utility costs into account in determining the amount of SNAP benefits for which they qualify. Follow the link to submit comments against the proposed rule before December 2.

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### **Medicare Open Enrollment Period**

Medicare's annual Open Enrollment period began Tuesday, Oct. 15 and ends Saturday, Dec. 7, 2019. The Ohio Department of Aging (ODA) and the Ohio Department of Insurance (ODI) are encouraging Ohioans with Medicare to review coverage options to ensure they are choosing the best plan to meet their needs and their budgets. ODI's Ohio Senior Health Insurance Information Program (OSHIIP) is hosting Medicare Check-Up events throughout the state to help consumers compare plans and learn about their options and available assistance. View a calendar of Medicare Check-Up events at [www.insurance.ohio.gov](http://www.insurance.ohio.gov). Those unable to attend a Medicare Check-Up event can contact OSHIIP at 1-800-686-1578 or call Medicare at 1-800-633-4227.

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### **Advocacy Contacts**

For questions or information, contact your advocacy team: Tim White, Advocacy Manager: (614) 317-9480 or [twhite@midohiofoodbank.org](mailto:twhite@midohiofoodbank.org); or, Marilyn Tomasi, Vice President, Marketing, Communications and Public Affairs (614) 317-9446 or [mtomasi@midohiofoodbank.org](mailto:mtomasi@midohiofoodbank.org). Access [advocacy resources](#) and [FAN e-blasts](#) here; or, for federal advocacy information, visit the [Feeding America](#) and the [Food Research and Action Center](#) (FRAC) advocacy sites.