



COLORADO FISCAL
POLICY INSTITUTE

727 E. 16th Ave., Main Suite • Denver, Colorado 80203 303-573-5669 • 303-573-4947 | Fax • www.cclponline.org

Justice and Economic Security for all Coloradans

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, June 4, 2007

Press Contacts:

Scott Downes 303-573-5669 ext 306

Michelle Dally: 303-356-2532

Food for thought: Can you eat on \$3 a day?

Join Mayor, state and local officials in raising hunger awareness in Colorado

Denver, CO—The Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute (COFPI) and the Colorado Anti-Hunger Network (CAN) are challenging all Coloradans to join the Mayor Hickenlooper, state legislators, local officials, and public personalities in the 2007 Food Stamp Challenge. The challenge consists of eating on a food stamp budget for one week, beginning on **National Hunger Awareness Day**, Tuesday, June 5th.

“Can you eat on just \$25 a week?” asked Tina Podolak, Executive Director of the Colorado Anti-Hunger Network. “We hope Coloradans will join us in raising awareness about hunger, and how it impacts the 251,000 people in our state who rely on food stamps for nutrition. These people face serious challenges every day—it’s very difficult to eat healthy and stay healthy on \$3.57 a day.”

Rep. John Kefalas, Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper, KWGN-TV2 anchor Ernie Bjorkman, Denver Human Services Manager Roxane White, and a host of others have all committed to undertaking the food stamp challenge.

Participants in the Food Stamp Challenge are asked to purchase food for the *week*, with no more than \$25.00, and no supplemented meals. In Colorado, the food stamp benefit is worth \$1.19 per person per meal, or approximately \$24.99 per week.

Participants may record and comment on their experiences on the Food Stamp Challenge blog (<http://colochallenge.blogspot.com/>). They are asked to record their shopping lists, as well as their observations and experiences throughout the week. Keeping tabs on the types of food purchased, quantities and nutritional value, coupons used, as well as any of the physical and mental reactions, will help highlight how hunger impacts Colorado families.

“By drawing more attention to hunger, we can hopefully help strengthen state and federal programs like food stamps that so many families rely on,” said Kathy White, Coordinator, Colorado Fiscal

Policy Institute. “This is not a problem hidden in the shadows. More than 80 percent of food stamps go to families with children—children who are at serious risk of being underfed and undernourished.”

As Congress considers the Food Stamp Program as part of the 2007 Farm Bill Reauthorization, CAN and COFPI are advocating changes to the program to help the families who need it. The proposed changes include:

- Expanding outreach and access to the program, to include seniors, legal immigrants and their children, low-income working families, and unemployed adults without children
- Increasing the minimum benefit
- Continuing to simplify and streamline the program
- Expanding nutrition and health education
- And restoring past changes to the program so that the value of food stamps keeps up with inflation, which it currently does not, resulting in the deterioration of its value to families.

Not only would easier access help thousands of people receive needed food and nutrition, but it would also have a substantial economic impact. Since food stamp benefits are spent directly at local grocers and markets, every \$5 in food stamp benefits brings in \$9.20 in economic activity. So increasing participation by just five percent would generate an estimated \$25.2 million of economic impact for Colorado stores and retailers.

“This is an economic issue on one level, but it’s also a human issue,” said Rep. John Kefalas. “We can do better to improve our food security systems and ensure that no one goes hungry, especially children and our most vulnerable residents.”

At the conclusion of the challenge, COFPI and CAN will compile stories from participants and utilize them to raise awareness, boost advocacy efforts, and help enact federal policy changes.

For more background information, facts about food stamps, and regular updates on the challenge throughout the week, please visit <http://colochallenge.blogspot.com>.