

# Military Hunger Prevention Act – H.R. 1078

## FACT SHEET

### Purpose

The Military Hunger Prevention Act, bipartisan legislation introduced by Reps. Susan Davis (D-CA with more than 60 cosponsors, would fix a technical error that has prevented struggling military families from qualifying for needed nutrition assistance benefits. This proposed change would exempt the military's monthly Basic Allowance for Housing from consideration as income for the determination of eligibility for federal nutrition assistance programs to relieve hunger in military households and ensure the mission readiness of our servicemembers.

### Background

Some military families – lower ranking enlisted servicemembers with larger households – unfortunately experience food insecurity. More than 22,000 military households are estimated to receive SNAP benefits to help with this situation. Yet other currently serving military families who struggle do not qualify to receive needed assistance because of an unintended quirk in the SNAP eligibility rules.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is available to qualifying low-income families, including military families. SNAP is an effective program that helps vulnerable households in challenging economic circumstances by providing assistance for food purchases. However, servicemembers living in off-base or privatized military housing who receive the military's monthly Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) are often disqualified from receiving SNAP food assistance because BAH is counted as income when determining program eligibility.

Federal tax law exempts BAH from taxation by the Internal Revenue Service. The IRS also lists BAH as one of the tax-exempt military allowances not considered as earned income when determining eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Head Start, and other federal assistance programs.

The barrier to accessing SNAP caused by counting BAH as income has led military families across the country to turn in desperation to food pantries and food banks – many operating on base or nearby military installations – for emergency food assistance. For example, there are four different emergency food distribution programs that operate on base at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton to serve the needs of military families stationed there.

### Support

This legislation has been endorsed by MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, Western Center on Law & Poverty, Hunger Advocacy Network, Blue Star Families, National Military Family Association, Air Force Sergeants Association, and the Military Health Project.

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