

MAZON™ NEWS

SPRING 2018



INSIDE THE BELTWAY

Navigating the 2018 Farm Bill. Page 3

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Updates from the field. Page 6

LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

“Inside the Beltway” is a term we all readily accept as a means of characterizing issues that are only of interest to Washington, D.C. insiders and not the American public.

Both Washington, D.C. and this phrase have been on our minds a lot lately, and we wondered who first used it. So, we did a little research into the origins of this phrase. It first appeared in a 1977 *Washington Post* headline on a fishing story: ‘Inside-the-Beltway Trout Fishing Nears’ and used the 1951 coinage of the term ‘Beltway’ for the circumferential highway that surrounds the area.

It’s been years since this phrase became widely used to indicate the inner workings of our nation’s capitol. Why do we raise this now? Why should you care?

When this newsletter reaches you, our nation’s leaders will be poised to begin debate on one of the most fundamental and far-reaching pieces of legislation affecting our nation: The Farm Bill. This omnibus legislation must be reviewed and re-authorized every 5 years, and it stands as a remarkable example of law and policy that attempts to address what often seem like competing needs within our complex food system upon on which all of America relies: of the farmers who grow our food; of the land upon which that food is grown; of those of us who consume it, particularly the vulnerable Americans who need the government to provide them with basic support so they can eat every day.

This work must not to be minimized nor dismissed as of interest solely to those literally inside the Beltway. It impacts all of us, yet far too often the truth of what is at stake is hidden from us or disguised by confusing rhetoric. In this newsletter, we want to bring *you* “Inside the Beltway.” We want to introduce you to the players and their roles. We want to remove the obscurity of the acronyms and pejorative labels placed on people who are only trying to feed themselves and their families. We want you to see what is really under discussion—not the headlines nor the stereotypes promoted by extremists.

What happens inside the Beltway is of vital importance to all Americans, and it cannot remain a mystery. MAZON’s history—and the Jewish values and traditions that inform that history—teach us that with knowledge comes understanding and with understanding comes the possibility of a better world. If you join us inside the Beltway, then we know that together we can work for a Farm Bill that reflects our best values for all Americans.

L’shalom,



Shirley Davidoff
BOARD CHAIR



Abby J. Leibman
PRESIDENT & CEO





2018 Farm Bill

STATE OF PLAY

Lawmakers in Washington, D.C. are in the midst of planning for the 2018 Farm Bill, a massive piece of legislation that, among other things, provides structure and funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the cornerstone of our nation’s nutrition safety net. For generations, the Farm Bill has served as a shining example of bipartisanship in addressing a broad range of issues that impact our nation’s food systems and the people who rely on them.

But we are seeing an alarming trend in debates on the Farm Bill—the promotion of a dangerous, partisan ideology about who is deserving of support. Every day in the news, we read yet another politician’s divisive rhetoric about our need to root out abuse, as if scores of Americans are milking the system so they can live the good life on the government dime. About how SNAP should be reserved for those “truly in need” or deemed “poor enough” to be worthy of assistance. About the magical thinking that good-paying work is available to anyone who wants it, as if somehow all the people who don’t have well-paying jobs have *chosen* that path for themselves.

MAZON’s 2018 Farm Bill Priorities

At the most basic level, MAZON believes the Farm Bill should do no harm and make an even greater contribution toward the goal of ending hunger, not add to the problem. This means:

- Protecting against hunger by strengthening SNAP and other essential federal nutrition assistance programs
- Removing barriers to assistance for specific vulnerable populations, including Currently Serving Military Families, Veterans, Seniors, Native Americans and College Students



Make no mistake: cuts to SNAP will have a devastating impact on millions of low-income Americans, including veterans, children, seniors, and people with disabilities. No group is more often lambasted than ABAWDs (able-bodied adults without dependents), whom politicians assert should have their access to SNAP restricted to just three months of support every three years. What these politicians fail to recognize is that, in many circumstances, there are not proper opportunities in their community—either appropriate jobs for people with their skills or sufficient training programs so they can learn new ones.

Perpetuating stereotypes and maligning categories of Americans is not the kind of leadership we need. Rhetoric and bluster do not serve our nation well—instead they imperil the lives of tens of millions of people who are doing everything they can just to get by. We cannot allow that to happen. We must stand up and demand a just Farm Bill that protects programs like SNAP, whose only purpose is to help struggling Americans put food on the table.

Although the Farm Bill represents less than one percent of the federal budget, those who decry a swelling federal deficit see it as an easy target for cuts. Especially ripe for slashing are those programs that are authorized in the nutrition title, SNAP being the largest among them. But weakening SNAP will worsen the problem of hunger, not help to end it.



Players to Watch: Who's Who in Farm Bill Negotiations



SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE
PAUL RYAN
R-WI

Speaker Ryan's years as Chair of the House Budget Committee tell us that he is a proponent of converting SNAP, along with other social safety net programs, into a block grant to the states. The most recent budget proposed by House Republicans under Speaker Ryan's leadership called for more than \$150 billion in SNAP cuts through extreme benefit and eligibility restrictions and harmful structural changes.



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE CHAIR
MIKE CONAWAY R-TX

According to Chairman Conaway, "improving the efficiency and efficacy" of SNAP will be a goal of his Committee as they craft the next Farm Bill. Be on the lookout for proposals that create barriers to SNAP, including intensifying the work requirements. His actions, including blocking the Military Hunger Prevention Act, cause us to worry.



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE RANKING MEMBER
COLLIN PETERSON D-MN

Ranking Member Peterson has long recognized the importance and effectiveness of federal nutrition assistance programs and has worked to protect and improve them. Peterson has many dairy and ag providers in his district, so he feels strongly about getting a Farm Bill done.

SNAP DEFENDER



SENATE MAJORITY LEADER
MITCH MCCONNELL
R-KY

Senator McConnell's past statements denigrating SNAP recipients make him someone to keep an eye on as the Farm Bill progresses in the Senate. As Majority Leader, McConnell also has a great deal of control over how open the process is for the Senate Farm Bill debates. He has said business leaders have told him they have "a hard time finding people to do the work because they're doing too good with food stamps, Social Security and all the rest."



SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND FORESTRY RANKING MEMBER
DEBBIE STABENOW D-MI

Ranking Member Stabenow worked hard in 2014 to negotiate a reasonable compromise to pass the Farm Bill that minimized cuts to SNAP. She has long been a champion of SNAP and other effective federal nutrition assistance programs.

SNAP DEFENDER

Look for Senators Roberts and Stabenow to continue to provide helpful leadership and work together toward a pragmatic approach for the Senate Farm Bill proposal.



SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND FORESTRY CHAIR
PAT ROBERTS R-KS

Committee Chair Pat Roberts (R-KS) said, "SNAP seems to be working, but we'll find ways to improve it in the 2018 Farm Bill." He and Senator Stabenow sought compromise back in 2014, and he has gone on record indicating that SNAP will not be block granted. It is important to hold Chairman Roberts to this commitment.



SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
SONNY PERDUE

Secretary Perdue has called SNAP "an important, effective program" to which he has "no proposed changes." However, he supported the President's recent budget proposal that included drastic changes to SNAP and a nearly 30% cut in funding. This dangerous budget proposal undermines the ability to pass a successful Farm Bill.

WAR OF WORDS

DECODING THE RHETORIC ABOUT SNAP: *What Politicians Really Mean*

When they say **ABAWDs** or **Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents**, they mean veterans, homeless individuals who struggle to find employment, caretakers of elderly relatives, and residents of states where the economic recovery has failed to materialize.

When they say **flexibility**, they mean allowing states to create barriers to nutrition assistance for people who need it through draconian work requirements and legally questionable tactics like drug testing.

When they say **welfare reform** and **workforce development**, they mean shredding the social safety net that includes SNAP, Medicaid, Social Security, and other programs that provide needed support to millions of Americans.

When they say **deficit reduction**, they mean cutting vital spending programs that help poor people, like SNAP, to offset the over one trillion dollar increase to the deficit created by the recently enacted tax plan.

When they say **self-sufficiency** or **independence**, they imply that certain groups of people choose not to

work because they would rather be passive recipients of government benefits.

When they say **block grants**, they mean changing SNAP from a federally administered program that can expand and contract based on need, to a finite amount of money given to states, who would have 'flexibility' to spend those funds as they want and without any federal oversight.

When they say **entitlement**, they suggest an undeserved 'handout.' In reality, **entitlement** programs like SNAP are simply government programs that are guaranteed for anyone who meets an established set of eligibility criteria.

When they say **work requirements**, they mean they expect everyone to have a job, regardless of whether jobs or training programs are available and ignoring the reality that most SNAP recipients who can work already do so.

When they say **efficiency**, they mean they want to reduce the number of people receiving SNAP benefits without regard for what will happen to those impacted.

The Jewish Response

By **Rabbi Harold J. Kravitz**, Adath Jeshurun Congregation, Minnetonka, MN, *Past Board Chair, MAZON*

As a rabbi whose congregation has an active social action committee, I was recently invited with other local clergy to a meeting at a local food pantry, which sought our help to expand their capacity to continue the good work they do providing food to those in need. Each of us represented congregations that take our responsibility to support our food pantries seriously, as we should.

Before the meeting ended, I felt a need to put on my MAZON hat and share a thought. While we were appropriately considering how to sustain this necessary emergency response, I wondered whether we, as clergy, were giving adequate attention to the tens of billions of dollars in cuts to federal safety net programs being proposed by the White House and Congress. Could any of us, whose congregations are already working so hard

to support our food pantries, imagine the rise in demand they will see if these cuts are enacted, which is a real possibility? It felt important at this moment to discuss our responsibility to remind those who represent us in government that we have a fundamental moral obligation, taught by each of our faith traditions, to provide food for those in need.

As we approach the Pesach holiday with its injunction, "Let all who are hungry enter and eat," let us take to heart the responsibility that the Exodus story places upon us to build a just society in which people have enough to eat. This must include sending a strong message about the obligation to feed the hungry, in which our federal government plays a critical role.

Advocacy In Action

At MAZON, we pursue our mission through a focused approach of strategic advocacy, education and partnerships. From drafting and building support for federal legislation that addresses the needs of underserved communities, to helping local organizations engage in advocacy to promote access to nutrition assistance programs and resources, we take action to impact the lives of millions of people who struggle with hunger. Here are a few highlights of our current advocacy work:



VETERANS

MAZON continues to lead a national effort to raise awareness about the problem of hunger among veterans and advocate for policy solutions.

- Working in partnership with USDA leaders and the VA's Ensuring Veteran Food Security Workgroup, we successfully advocated for implementation of a food insecurity screening tool within the VA's clinical reminder system, ensuring all veterans receiving care will be asked about their ability to put food on the table. We are now working with VA leaders to consider a protocol for referrals and SNAP eligibility screening for veterans found to be food insecure.
- We moderated a recent Congressional briefing, bringing together a bipartisan group of Representatives to discuss opportunities in the Farm Bill to reduce veterans' food insecurity.
- Vets are over-represented in the ABAWD population, so we are raising awareness about ABAWDs and the impact that changes to SNAP work requirements and time limits will have.



INDIAN COUNTRY

MAZON is working to improve food security and health among rural, remote and Native American communities.

- MAZON is proud to be an official ally to the Native Farm Bill Coalition, a groundbreaking umbrella organization formed to advocate for Native American interests in the 2018 Farm Bill.
- We joined tribal officials and Native food policy advocates to advise the new administration on improving FDPIR (Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations). MAZON is the only non-native organization invited.



THIS IS HUNGER

MAZON is educating and engaging synagogue partners and others about the reality and scope of hunger in America through this powerful, immersive exhibit.

- As of February 2018, MAZON will have engaged 90 host organizations at over 63 stops in 29 states and the District of Columbia, and welcomed more than 15,000 visitors.
- We have secured a permanent installation location in Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley, which will be open to the public by appointment in Summer 2018.



QUICK RESPONSE FUND (QRF)

MAZON's QRF, launched in September 2017, supports time-sensitive initiatives and actions for which a targeted and strategic action may yield a meaningful outcome.

- We have supported three state-level actions so far: urging the governor of California to sign bills that provide school meals to children and help those impacted by disasters to put food on the table; raising awareness in West Virginia to fight far-reaching cuts to social welfare programs; and opposing drug testing of certain SNAP applicants in Wisconsin.

NEW RESEARCH REPORT

A Tipping Point: Opportunities to Improve the Nutritional Quality of Food Bank Inventory

MAZON is about to release a groundbreaking research report highlighting the need for systemic change within the charitable food system. Stay tuned for more information!

WE WELCOME NEW STAFF

Sammy Chavin, *Administrative Assistant, D.C. Office*

Sammy provides direct administrative support to the D.C. team, and assists on special events and projects. Sammy recently completed the Jews United for Justice Jeremiah Fellowship. She comes to MAZON with experience in nonprofit management, administrative support, and event management. She holds a B.S. in Neuroscience and a B.A. in French from Lafayette College. She also studied at the Université Paris Diderot, completing a semester of language immersion with a focus on theatre and film.

Joe Goldman, *Senior Policy Associate*

Before returning to his native Los Angeles, Joe spent nearly six years working in the Bay Area on a wide array of domestic and foreign policy issues, most recently as the Public Affairs & Civic Engagement Manager for the Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco. Joe holds a Masters of Political Management and a B.A. degree in Political Communication from The George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Liza Lieberman, *Director of Public Policy*

Liza brings nearly a decade of experience at HIAS, a global Jewish nonprofit that protects refugees. Her tenure at HIAS spanned public affairs, advocacy, community engagement, and fundraising. She spearheaded the organization's public education on issues related to immigration, asylum, and refugee policy issues, managing key relationships and partnerships on Capitol Hill and in various government agencies including the Departments of State and Homeland Security. She also coordinated HIAS' role at key policy coalitions such as Refugee Council USA, the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, the International Religious Freedom Roundtable, and "We Were Strangers, Too: The Jewish Campaign for Immigration Reform." Before joining HIAS, Liza supported the energy law team at a Minneapolis-based law firm, worked with the development team at Women for Women International, and taught English through the Chilean Ministry of Education's Inglés Abre Puertas program. Liza is a proud volunteer counselor with Crisis Text Line and holds a degree in International Relations from American University.

Morgan Soloski, *Senior Communications Manager*

Morgan brings over a decade of experience in the foundation and nonprofit sector. Most recently, she was the Senior Manager for Marketing and Communications for the Joyful Heart Foundation, which addresses sexual assault and domestic violence. In this role, she managed large-scale public awareness campaigns and led partnerships with Viacom, the Verizon Foundation, and the office of Vice President Joe Biden. She previously worked for American Jewish World Service, a leading human rights organization, developing communications and marketing strategies to promote fundraising and advocacy campaigns, and providing strategic guidance on branding, messaging and audience engagement. Morgan holds a B.A. in English Literature from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Masters of Public Policy and Nonprofit Management from New York University's Wagner School of Public Service.

GIVE A GIFT TODAY

During Passover, we say 'Let all who are hungry, come and eat.' Your support helps us make this call a reality on behalf of all those who are hungry in our midst.

Give a gift today by using the attached envelope, visiting mazon.org, or by calling us at (800) 813-0557.

Thank you for your generous support!



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BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR!

Help us fight for more hungry families.
Please call us at (800) 813-0557
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LEGACY GIVING AND GIFT PLANNING

Find out about life-income gifts, giving through your will, or other creative ways to support MAZON.
Please contact Amy Smith at asmith@mazon.org
or by phone at (424) 208-7226.

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WHO IS MAZON?

Inspired by Jewish values and ideals, MAZON is a national advocacy organization working to end hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds in the United States and Israel.

REACH US

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