ADVOCACY IN ACTION

CHARACTER PACKET

STATE SENATOR B (UNDECIDED)

INSIDE:

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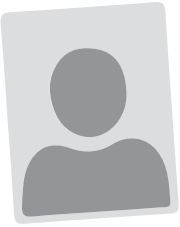
- SNAP Backgrounder
- Bible Verses for Senator B

MAZON | A Jewish Response To Hunger



STATE SENATOR B (UNDECIDED)

BACKGROUND

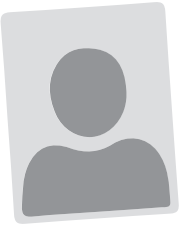
You are a fiscal conservative yet progressive on many social issues. You were elected with support from both the business community and the Jewish community, and so you take input from both of these constituencies. Pay careful attention to how much each group seems to care about the bill. Voting YES could mean losing funding and voting NO could mean losing Jewish votes, but if either group seems disorganized to not care about the issue, you may take that as a sign that voting against that group will not harm you politically.
You are a devout Christian but also have great respect for the moral teachings of Judaism. A protest might let you know that a lot of people care about this bill and affect the way you vote, though you may also decide you feel personally attacked and shut out the people in the protest.

POSITION ON THE BILL

You are on the fence about the bill and it is ultimately your decision which way you vote. You are potentially open to any of the amendments. You are conflicted on multiple fronts:

- You have empathy for hungry people but you also worry that welfare makes people less likely to look for work and so are reluctant to make SNAP more generous.
- You are not sure whether this would be good or bad for businesses in the short run, or the economy in the long run (it would also be troubling if you thought the program would help farmers markets but hurt grocery stores).
- You are concerned with the cost of program, and wonder if it would be possible to help people more cheaply and efficiently.
- Your Christian faith tells you to protect the sick and needy, but also that people must contribute to society to deserve benefits.

When making your decisions, you should think about you own views on the bill, as well how your vote will affect donations, votes, or support from influential organizations. When meeting with other characters, pay close attention to the arguments they make, and also note whether they support the bill and what amendments they support, as well as how important it is to please them (ex. You may care more about pleasing the Jewish community, who voted for you, than you would the farmers market owner, who you have no relationship with). By the public hearing you don't have to be totally decided, but you should have some idea of what you want and don't want.



STATE SENATOR B (UNDECIDED)

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ACTORS

- You have worked with EHN in the past, but you are not close with them and do not need to prioritize meeting with them.
- You have never worked with MAZON but you know that they are working with EHN on this issue.
- You have a tense relationship Jobs With Justice, who have protested you in the past and supported your more progressive opponents in elections. You are reluctant to meet with them at all, but ultimately it is your choice.
- You were elected with the support of the Jewish community. You do not know the Rabbi well but are willing to meet with them because they represent the Jewish community in your state, and because of your respect for the religion.
- You do not agree with Conservative Policy Center says, but you trust their opinions and may choose to seek their input when deciding how to vote.
- The chamber of commerce sees you as pro-business. They have supported you in past elections and given moderate donations to your campaigns. You should probably prioritize meeting with them, and you don't want to get on their bad side though it wouldn't be the end of the world as they are not a major donor.
- You do not know the farmer's market owner or shopper, and so if they try to meet with you it is your choice whether to see them, but they are not priorities.
- It is your choice whether to meet with the reporter.

ADDITIONAL GOALS

- Think both about how a politician with your views might vote based on their own personal beliefs, and also try to determine what vote would be the most politically savvy / least harmful for you.

STATE OF CALISSOURI SENATE

Eighty-Ninth Session **S.B. No. 47**

TITLE OF BILL:

Healthy Eating, Here at Home

BE IT ENACTED BY LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF CALISSOURI

SECTION 1: BILL DETAILS

SNAP recipients are able to receive dollar for dollar matching vouchers for SNAP benefits they spend at farmers markets, up to $10 per week. There is no cap on the number of vouchers farmers markets may give out.

Farmers market EBT booths will have tokens that SNAP recipients may exchange for EBT dollars.

Farmers markets will keep logs of how many people use the tokens, and will apply for reimbursement at the end of each month. They may also apply for grants to advertise the voucher program and to pay for the extra administrative cost of running the program.

Only people already on SNAP can participate in this program.

The program will be run by End Hunger Now, who will be responsible for administration, outreach, and evaluation.

SECTION 2: FUNDING

The program will receive annual funding of $500,000 from the Calissouri's budget. This funding goes to a non-profit (End Hunger Now), who will run the program. The money may be spent on:

- Directly reimbursing farmers markets for vouchers.
- Advertising/outreach and administration (additional staffing, bookkeeping, etc.) grants.

The money may NOT be spent on:

- Helping farmers markets to set up booths that except EBT cards (credit cards on which SNAP money is loaded).
- Administration of farmers market EBT booths not directly related to the vouchers program.

The funding is guaranteed for two years, after which End Hunger Now and the State legislature will evaluate the program and determine if it is successful and worth continuing to fund.

SECTION 3: POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendment 1: Double the yearly funding, and raise the voucher amount to $25 / week.

Amendment 2: Instead of a set $500,000 yearly sum, pay for the bill through 5% sales tax increase (which is calculated by the Calissouri State Budget Office to yield about the same amount of revenue).

Amendment 3: Reinstate work requirements: Unemployed adults without children may only stay on SNAP for 3 months at a time unless they find work.

SNAP BACKGROUNDER

WHAT IS SNAP?

The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (SNAP), formerly known food stamps, is a government program that helps low income Americans to purchase healthy food. SNAP recipients receive a monthly stipend loaded onto an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, which looks like a credit card and can be used at most grocery stores as well as some convenience stores and farmers markets.

SNAP is a federal program, but it is run by states. It is an entitlement program, meaning that any household that is eligible for the program is entitled to receive benefits, and states are not allowed to turn anybody away because they run out of money. Anybody who meets the eligibility requirements is able to access SNAP.

SNAP participants do not fit one single profile, but many of the people who benefit from SNAP are

- Working part-time or low wage jobs
- Unemployed
- Receiving welfare or other public assistance
- Elderly or disabled
- homeless

The size of the benefit depends on each family's income as well as other factors. In 2016 the average monthly benefit for a family of four was $471, which translates to $1.31 per meal per person. SNAP benefits are meant to supplement, rather than replace families' meal budgets.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility requirements vary by state, but in general households below 130% the federal poverty line ($31,980 per year for a family of four in 2016) are eligible to receive SNAP based on their income. Certain expenses, such as childcare payments and medical expenses, are subtracted when determining income. Households must also pass a resource test, meaning that the value of their eligible assets must be below a certain amount, which in most states is around $2250, or $3250 for households with a disabled or elderly family member. Home lot values, SSI and TANF (cash based government assistance programs) benefits, and most pension plans do not count as eligible assets.

Certain SNAP users must comply with work requirements in order to continue to receive benefits. Childless, able-bodied adults who are able to work receive SNAP for a maximum of 3 months in a 36 month period unless they (1) are working at least 20 hours a week, (2) are at least a half-time student, or (3) are enrolled in a job training program. During the Great Recession, when unemployment was high, many states obtained waivers to get rid of the work requirement. In recent years many of those states are deciding to reinstate work requirements.

BIBLE VERSES

Gittin 7b
Even a poor person who receives tzedakah must give from what he receives.

2 Thessalonians 3:10
For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.