ADVOCACY IN ACTION

CHARACTER PACKET

STATE SENATOR A (PRO)

INSIDE:

- Character Info/Background
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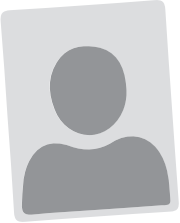
- SNAP Backgrounder

MAZON | A Jewish Response To Hunger



STATE SENATOR A (PRO)

BACKGROUND

You represent a diverse and relatively progressive district and you are a strong believer in the social safety net. You understand that SNAP is an important and effective program, however, your main focus as Senator has been on infrastructure, and you do not focus as much on social benefits programs or food insecurity. The non-profit organization End Hunger Now (EHN) has encouraged you to be more of a champion on these issues, but you do not think hunger is an important issue to your voters, many of whom are members of the Jewish community.

Right now you are willing to compromise to get the bill passed. A protest might let you know people care about this bill and make you fight harder for the bill and oppose amendments that your supporters to not like.

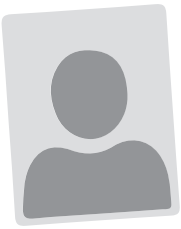
POSITION ON THE BILL

You are almost definitely a "yes" vote.

- You are open to Amendment 1 but do not want to risk alienating the business community.You would also accept Amendment 2 as a compromise, as long as you don't think it will seriously harm your chances of re-election.
- You will not vote for a bill containing Amendment 3.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ACTORS

- You have a close relationship with EHN and have worked with them in the past. You can prioritize meeting with them to preserve your relationship.
- The farmers market shopper is a major donor, so you should also prioritize them.
- You have never worked with MAZON but you know that they are working with EHN on this issue. It is your choice whether to prioritize them.
- You know of Jobs With Justice, and generally support their work, but you do not have as much of a relationship with them and so meeting with them is not a priority.



STATE SENATOR A (PRO)

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ACTORS *continued*

- You do not know the Rabbi well but will meet with him because they represent the Jewish community in your state, which generally votes for you in elections.
- You do not trust the views of the Conservative Policy Center and will take everything they say with several grains of salt. It is your choice whether to meet with them.
- You do not have a great relationship with the Chamber of Commerce, who believes you are anti-business and have endorsed your opponents in previous elections. It is your choice whether to meet with them.
- You do not know the farmer's market owner, and so if they try to meet with you it is your choice whether to see them, but they are not a priority.
- It is your choice whether to meet with the reporter.

ADDITIONAL GOALS

- Determine which amendments (both progressive and not-progressive) seem politically safe.

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.