ADVOCACY IN ACTION

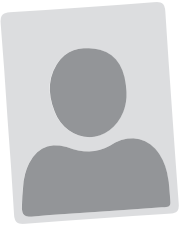
CHARACTER PACKET

STATE SENATOR C (CON)

INSIDE:

- Character Info/Background
- Legislation Draft: Healthy Eating, Here at Home
- SNAP Backgrounder

MAZON | A Jewish Response To Hunger



STATE SENATOR C (CON)

BACKGROUND

You are a staunch conservative. Your family briefly used food stamps growing up, but you still do not support the program. You believe it should exist, but also believe in decreasing funding, instituting stronger work requirements, and restricting foods that can be bought with food stamps. You use your experience as a food stamp recipient to argue that when food stamp benefits are too generous, it makes recipients less likely to look for work.

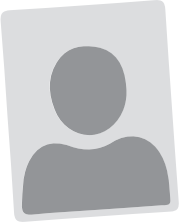
POSITION ON THE BIL

You will most likely be a "no" vote.

- You do not support Amendment 1.
- You like Amendment 2, and it is your choice whether or not to support the bill if this amendment passes.
- You love Amendment 3. If Amendment 3 is in the bill you will consider voting "yes," regardless of whether Amendments 1 or 2 pass.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ACTORS

- You are extremely close with the Conservative Policy Center, put a lot of trust in what they say, and will often seek their input on issues.
- The chamber of commerce sees you as pro-business. They have supported you in past elections and are a major campaign donor. You should d prioritize meeting with them, and want to avoid voting for any bill that they don't support.
- You do not know the Rabbi and they are not a priority.
- You have never worked with MAZON but you know that they are working with EHN on this issue.
- You believe that End Hunger Now is biased, and in general do not trust what they have to say.



STATE SENATOR C (CON)

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ACTORS *continued*

- Jobs With Justice have protested you in the past, supported your opponents in elections, and been very critical of you in their official speech and writings. You will not meet with them.
- 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

- Try to convince Senator B to vote no as well.
- If it seems like you won't be able to stop the bill, you can try to leverage your vote to get Amendment 3 passed.

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.