



LB171: Food Stamp Program Options

LB 171, as introduced, would require the Department of Health and Human Services to apply for and utilize all options available under the Federal Food Stamp Program to better serve Nebraska's children and families. .

LB 171 Makes the Federal Food Stamp Program Better for Nebraska. The Food Stamp Program is the nation's first line of defense against hunger. Nebraska has one of the most efficient and accurate programs in the nation providing over 120,000 people with food assistance each month. Yet, one in ten Nebraskans struggle with hunger, and the Food Stamp program could do more to help families and communities statewide. LB171 would require the Department of Human Services to utilize options to:

- Bring More Federal Dollars to Nebraska Communities: Nebraska currently leaves as much as \$60 million in federal food stamp dollars on the table. Utilizing these options will allow us to draw down more federal dollars that will be spent in local communities.
- Expand Outreach: *Only 61% of eligible Nebraskans are currently receiving Food Stamps.* Taking advantage of the Federal Outreach Option would provide a 50/50 federal funding match to educate approximately 60,000 Nebraskans about their eligibility.
- Improve Systems for Clients: Developing electronic applications, a statewide call center, waiving fact-to face recertification in appropriate cases, and using simplified homeless housing costs in benefits calculation are all options that would improve access and receipt of Food Stamps for clients.
- Account for Costs Facing Low-Income Working Families: This option would allow Nebraska to provide Food Stamp assistance to certain families that face high housing and child care costs.

Food Stamps Work for Families, the Economy, and the State. The Food Stamp Program is a 100% federally funded benefit that allows eligible recipients to purchase nutritious foods in authorized retail stores.

- The Food Stamp Program is Targeted Efficiently. It is designed to reach people who have the most difficulty affording an adequate diet. 95% of benefits go to working households with incomes below the poverty level, about \$26,000 for a family of four.
- The Food Stamp Program Stimulates Nebraska's Economy. In 2006, the State of Nebraska received \$124,315,497 in federal food stamp funds that boosted local economies. According to the USDA, the *Food Stamp Program generated \$228,740,514 in economic activity in Nebraska* in just a year's time.

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- The Food Stamp Program is Efficient and Closely Monitored. The General Accounting Office reports that food stamp error rates are at an all-time low. Ninety-eight percent of recipients are eligible for the program, and Nebraska's program has been nationally recognized for accuracy in program administration for several years in a row.

Hunger in Nebraska: According to the United States Department of Agriculture, from 2004 to 2006 an average of 9.5% percent of Nebraska households struggled with hunger – including senior citizens living on fixed incomes and low-income working families.

LB 171 can provide the opportunity to educate approximately 60,000 Nebraskans about their eligibility for the Food Stamp Program – a key component in developing economic self-sufficiency - and improve the application and recertification processes for the elderly and clients in rural areas. *Vote yes on LB171!*

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