



## **OBAMA AND BIDEN: TACKLING DOMESTIC HUNGER**

*"We've got rising food prices here in the United States. My top priority is making sure that people are able to get enough to eat." Senator Obama [Meet The Press, 5/4/08]*

When he was a child, Barack Obama's mother briefly received food stamps to put food on the table when she needed help. As a result, Barack Obama understands firsthand that federal nutrition and food assistance programs play a key role in minimizing the ill-effects of poverty and improving the diets of low-income working families, especially children. Barack Obama will strengthen and expand nutrition assistance programs and commit to ending childhood hunger by 2015.

Barack Obama and Joe Biden recognize that with rising food prices, existing benefits and programs are not enough to provide a healthy meal. Too many of our fellow citizens - over 35.5 million Americans, including 12.6 million children - face a constant struggle against hunger. For that reason, they supported provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill that improved the Food Stamp Program (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program/SNAP) and strengthened other nutrition programs, such as increasing funding for emergency food assistance and improving the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables in schools with significant numbers of low-income children.

*Improving and expanding federal food assistance and nutrition programs will also be a key component of ending hunger in the United States.*

### **PROTECTING VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS**

- **Senior Citizens.** Too many of our seniors are forced to choose between spending their fixed incomes on food or medicine. Help is available to millions of seniors living on fixed incomes through SNAP and the federal health insurance programs that can help pay for prescription drugs and Medicare premiums, but too often seniors don't know about these programs and don't enroll. Much of this problem is caused by different federal government agencies failing to work together to solve the problems of our citizens. An Obama Administration will change that dynamic and work aggressively to create streamlined program rules and enrollment processes to make it easier for low-income seniors to get both the nutrition and health coverage for which they are eligible and which they deserve.
- **Infants and Toddlers.** Many of our most vulnerable citizens, especially seniors and very young children, need nutrition assistance to lead full and productive lives. The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program, for example, ensures that children have access to the basic nutrition they need. It is a smart investment and prevents health care costs by helping to ensure the healthy development of infants and toddlers.

**Addressing Immediate Need as a Result of Economic Crisis:** Barack Obama has a comprehensive plan to jumpstart the economy and prevent 1 million Americans from losing their jobs. The plan also helps to address the economic instability that has made it more difficult for families and seniors to put food on the table. The Obama-Biden \$25 billion State Growth Fund will prevent state and local cuts in health, education, housing and

provide other vital support to low-income families, including a temporary boost in SNAP benefits. This will get immediate help to the 1 in 10 Americans (1 in 5 children) who rely on this program to meet their food needs as well as help to stimulate the economy.

**Tackling Poverty:** The most effective way to eliminate childhood hunger and reduce hunger among adults is through a broad expansion of economic opportunity. Unfortunately, the past eight years have seen a significant retreat from the gains made in reducing poverty in the 1990s. From 2000 to 2007, the number of individuals living in poverty rose by nearly 6 million, to a total of 37.3 million. During the same time period, the number of Americans experiencing food insecurity increased as well. Barack Obama understands that poverty is the primary cause of hunger and has a comprehensive plan to reduce and alleviate poverty, including providing permanent tax relief for working families, expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, raising the minimum wage, and providing affordable, accessible health insurance.

**Eliminate Child Hunger by 2015:** According to the Department of Agriculture, in 2006, 430,000 children in the United States experienced hunger. Further, 1 in 8 Americans and 1 in 6 children lives in a household that is food insecure -- an unacceptable situation. Among Hispanic and African American households, rates of food insecurity are even higher. Hunger exacts serious tolls on the health and development of children, and is associated with poor health, behavioral problems, and developmental problems. As President, Barack Obama will fight to end child hunger by 2015 through his anti-poverty plan, as well as through major commitments that build upon existing federal food assistance programs.

***Feeding and Nourishing America's Children.*** Barack Obama and Joe Biden believe that federal nutrition programs, such as Food Stamps/SNAP, the School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, Summer Food Service Program, and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) are critical to delivering nutrition assistance to lower income families and they were proud to support the increases in funding for these programs in the 2008 Farm Bill.

Our federal nutrition programs not only reduce hunger, they reduce poverty, prevent obesity, strengthen schools and child care programs, and boost children's health, development and school achievement. As president, Barack Obama will improve access and participation in school meals and expand the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, which provides free fresh fruits and vegetables to low-income elementary school children. He will work with Congress to produce a strong Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Bill that better meets the needs of America's children and pregnant women.

***Providing All Poor Children with a Free School Meal.*** Simplifying program rules in the National School Lunch Program will not only reduce paperwork and administrative costs, but will also ensure that low-income children receive the nutrition assistance they need. Automatically enrolling children who are already participating in the Food Stamp Program in the National School Lunch Program has reduced program error and increased the number of needy children who receive meals. An Obama-Biden administration will seek to build on this success by automatically enrolling more poor children in the school meals program who are participating in other means tested programs such as federal health programs.

***Providing Nutrition Assistance throughout the Year.*** Though school-based nutrition programs reach many eligible children during the school year, hunger doesn't take a break during the summer, when most children lose access to school-based federal nutrition assistance such as the National School Lunch Program. To fight hunger during the summer, Obama will expand the summer feeding program. And, for rural areas where summer feeding programs may not be available, he will implement a pilot program to provide poor children with additional nutrition through SNAP. An Obama-Biden Administration will also support solutions to child hunger that occur after school and on weekends.

***Supporting Community-Based Providers.*** Food banks and community-based food providers are often the first point of contact for families who need help putting food on the table. Barack Obama and Joe Biden are proud of their support for the historic levels of support provided to food banks in the 2008 Farm Bill and will work to ensure that food banks and community-based food providers have the food and funding necessary to carry out their critical work in the future.

**Improve Government's Response to Hunger:** Though our federal food assistance programs are effective when they reach those in need, many eligible families and children don't participate in these programs. For example, the Food Stamp Program serves only two-thirds of eligible recipients. Too often, unnecessary hurdles and a bureaucratic culture get in the way of meaningful assistance for the most vulnerable populations. An Obama-Biden administration will ensure strong program integrity and improve government's performance while still providing strong customer service.

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