



## Priorities for Food Stamp Reauthorization

### Background

- Over 251,000 Coloradans (5.3 percent) rely on food stamps to help provide a nutritionally adequate diet. The number of people in Colorado receiving food stamps has risen over 61 percent since 2000.
- 220,000 households in Colorado are what the USDA calls food insecure.
- In Colorado food stamps are worth about \$1.19 per meal per person.
- The Food Stamp Program brought over \$323 million to the Colorado economy in 2006.
- About 80 percent of food stamps go to households with children. The remaining 20 percent goes to households with elderly or disabled people.
- Nationwide the \$26.5 billion in federal food stamp benefits generated an estimated \$52.6 billion in economic activity and created an estimated 173,000 farm jobs.

### Policy Priorities

- Stop the benefit erosion. Every year the purchasing power of food stamp benefits shrinks as a result of changes made in 1996 welfare law. In calculating a household food stamp benefit, the household is permitted to take a standard deduction reflecting basic, non-food living expenses. The 1996 welfare law, among other cuts, froze the standard deduction and has resulted in the decreasing purchasing power of food stamps for households of three or less. The 1992 farm bill corrected the benefit erosion for households of four or more, but now is the time to fix this problem for all households.
  - Benefit erosion affects 130,000 households in Colorado. A family of one parent and two children will receive \$300 less in food stamp benefits next year and Colorado stands to lose \$23.9 million in economic activity.
  - Ending the benefit erosion would mean adjusting the standard deduction for households of one to three persons beginning in 2008. The current standard deduction for households of one to three is \$134 per month. This improvement is estimated to cost \$1.3 billion over five years.
- **Keep the Focus of the Nutrition Title on Addressing Hunger in America.** The USDA and Census Bureau find that more than 35 million people in the United States live in households that face a constant struggle against hunger. 220,000 Coloradans are considered food insecure. It is essential that the 2007 Farm Bill address the pressing problem of hunger amidst plenty by strengthening the nation's Food Stamp Program.
- **Reduce Access Barriers.** While the 2002 Farm Bill helped to make it easier for low-income people to participate in the Food Stamp program, many eligible people are missing out on benefits that could help address their food needs. More than one-half of eligible working families and 70 percent of eligible elderly individuals do not participate in the program. Congress should continue its efforts to reduce unnecessary paperwork, streamline eligibility rules where appropriate and invest in outreach and enrollment efforts. In Colorado, the Food Stamp application is 21 pages long.

Average Total Colorado Food Stamp Cases by County March 2006 to February 2007

County Name	Average Annual FS Cases	Average Monthly FS Cases	County Name	Average Annual FS Cases	Average Monthly FS Cases
ADAMS	108,983	9,082	LARIMER	62,204	5,184
ALAMOSA	14,403	1,200	LAS ANIMAS	8,880	740
ARAPAHOE	116,677	9,723	LINCOLN	1,809	151
ARCHULETA	2,627	219	LOGAN	8,449	704
BACA	1,667	139	MEDICAL ASSISTANCE S	16	1
BENT	4,526	377	MESA	48,876	4,073
BOULDER	49,313	4,109	MINERAL	138	12
BROOMFIELD	5,746	479	MOFFAT	4,585	382
CHAFFEE	4,382	365	MONTEZUMA	9,000	750
CHEYENNE	517	43	MONTROSE	13,241	1,103
CLEAR CREEK	1,929	161	MORGAN	8,248	687
CONEJOS	7,363	614	OTERO	15,240	1,270
COSTILLA	4,429	369	OURAY	641	53
CROWLEY	3,187	266	PARK	2,850	238
CUSTER	949	79	PHILLIPS	1,072	89
DELTA	11,503	959	PITKIN	311	26
DENVER	263,410	21,951	PROWERS	9,194	766
DOLORES	546	46	PUEBLO	121,583	10,132
DOUGLAS	9,826	819	RIO BLANCO	1,028	86
EAGLE	2,064	172	RIO GRANDE	11,454	955
ELBERT	2,180	182	ROUTT	1,479	123
EL PASO	166,712	13,893	SAGUACHE	5,131	428
FREMONT	15,072	1,256	SAN JUAN	200	17
GARFIELD	6,896	575	SAN MIGUEL	598	50
GILPIN	812	68	SEDGWICK	619	52
GRAND	1,205	100	STATE OF COLORADO	4	0
GUNNISON	2,041	170	SUMMIT	1,674	140
HINSDALE	87	7	TELLER	5,380	448
HUERFANO	5,811	484	WASHINGTON	982	82
JACKSON	391	33	WELD	45,581	3,798
JEFFERSON	73,387	6,116	YUMA	2,991	249
KIOWA	538	45	<b>COLORADO TOTALS</b>	<b>1,296,985</b>	<b>108,082</b>
KIT CARSON	2,245	187			
LAKE	1,197	100			
LA PLATA	10,906	909			

