



The Jewish Federations®
Washington Office
OF NORTH AMERICA

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EMERGENCY FOOD AND SHELTER PROGRAM FY2016

Request: Please ask your Senators and Representatives to weigh in with Congressional leadership and appropriators to maintain \$120 million for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) within the final spending bill Congress is negotiating. This is the amount House appropriators included this summer within the FY 2016 Homeland Security Appropriations bill. Protecting the program from a proposed cut of \$20 million within the Senate's companion bill is critical to thousands of families and individuals facing economic emergencies.

Program Overview: Since 1983, the EFSP program has remained a unique preventative public-private partnership to help individuals and families who have fallen into emergency economic crisis, from falling further into chronic homelessness or hunger and related privations. The program supplements nearly 10,000 public and nonprofit community-based human services providers located in as many as 2,500 cities and counties across the country.

The funds are disbursed locally, based on local assessments of need, and administered with the help of a national board composed of leading charitable organizations, of which The Jewish Federations of North America is a founding member. The program supplements the services provided by approximately 100 Jewish Family and Children's Agencies, food pantries and other programs that serve people facing food insecurity and homelessness.

Current Status: Since FY2011, the EFSP program has lost 45% of its funding, as part of the severe budget constraints Congress has placed on domestic discretionary programs through the Budget Control Act of 2011 and sequestration. Beginning in FY 2011, the program's allocation dropped from \$200 million to \$120 million. This year, the Senate Homeland Security Appropriations bill includes an additional \$20 million cut to EFSP, while the House bill maintains current funding at \$120 million.

Issue: If the proposed \$20 million cut was adopted, when adjusted for inflation, the amount would equate to the lowest allocation in EFSP's 32-year history. A cut of \$20 million in the program's budget would result in the provision of 10.8 million fewer meals, 730 thousand fewer nights lodging, 9 thousand fewer rent/mortgage assistance payments, and 27 thousand fewer utilities payments in fiscal year 2016.

Justification: Over the years, EFSP has been assessed to be a highly regarded and well run program by Congress, the Administration, and program providers and clients. It operates efficiently, with strong oversight and low administrative costs. Yet, the program's allocation was severely cut beginning in FY 2011, which resulted in 500 fewer jurisdictions and 2,800 fewer human services agencies being eligible to participate in the program. More cuts would lead to proportionally fewer jurisdictions and agencies participating.

The proposed cut is inconsistent with continuing challenges to the economy that have led to an increasing number of Americans who rely on food and housing assistance programs, such as EFSP, to meet their basic needs and to forestall more severe hardships. According to the most recent data provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of new jobs reported has decreased month over month from May through September 2015. In May, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported total nonfarm payroll employment increased by 280,000. By September, BLS reported only 142,000 jobs created or close to one-half the growth reported in May.

As of September, BLS reported that 7.9 million Americans were unemployed. This is a very misleading statistic. First, more than 2 million of the unemployed were jobless for 27 weeks or more. Not included in the figure were the 6 million full-time job seekers who were stuck in part-time jobs, and the nearly 2 million additional full-time job seekers who were not counted among the unemployed, because they had not looked for work in the four weeks leading up to the latest BLS report. More accurately, there were nearly 16 million workers (unemployed or under-employed) who were not fully employed as of September. These truer numbers reflect the persistent weakness in the jobs market and the need, during this prolonged economic recovery, for Congress, at a minimum, to oppose further cuts to EFSP.

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