

EDITORIAL

Oregon steps up on food stamps where feds fall back

At the start of this year, the nation's food subsidy for poor, elderly and disabled Americans amounted to about \$1.50 per meal.

Earlier this year, Congress pushed it even lower, to about \$1.40 a meal, even as food prices continue to rise. Congress voted as usual, for pork, further and further detached from the real needs our friends and neighbors face.

In Oregon, it would mean tens of millions of dollars pulled from the mouths of the poor, including children, during a critical time when good nutrition is vital to physical and mental development.

It was once a common sense conclusion that the welfare of the citizenry was of national interest, not a catch-as-catch-can local charity.

Which is why we commend Gov. John Kitzhaber and state officials for working to find a short-term solution on food stamps for Oregonians. The state is looking to tap

its own coffers to fill a portion of the gap, and continue to leverage federal food stamp funds. More than 800,000 Oregonians rely on food benefits.

Oregon joins three other states, New York, Connecticut and Pennsylvania, in stepping up in the war on poverty where the federal government refuses to even hold the ground.

In fact, 50 years after President Lyndon Johnson's, "War on Poverty," was launched to support vulnerable citizens to overcome hardship in America — nearly 15 percent of the population or roughly 50 million people now live in poverty. After decades worth of support from federal agencies to support employment, food and housing subsidies for low-income Americans — the war on poverty in the past 25 years has taken on a whole new meaning.

Hundreds of billions of dollars have been slashed from a range of poverty programs since the Reagan era and currently Tea Party favorite Paul Ryan and his colleagues believe that the U.S. should continue to cut federal programs to support middle and low-income people in favor of smaller government. Of course a smaller government makes perfect sense, if you intend to serve a smaller portion of the population — the one that profits, literally.

It was once a common sense conclusion that the welfare of the citizenry was of national interest, not a catch-as-catch-can local charity. Yet over the past 25 years, the federal government has shirked its responsibility as much because of poor fiscal management as a paralyzing partisanship that grows more contentious with each passing election. We watch, year after year, as federal lawmakers cut and run on complex and expanding social issues, and then blame the victims for their trouble.

Indeed, Oregonians should be proud that we are stepping up to fill the gap. But we should do so with a message to Washington D.C.: Enough of the cut and run. Poverty belongs to all of us.

Readers play vital role at Street Roots

New readers often tell me about Street Roots, "I had no idea the content was so good. You're actually producing real, in-depth journalism."

Why yes — yes we are.

Readers then usually follow with, "I wish more people understood the concept and read the newspaper. I absolutely love the vendors."

Here's a few ways you can help spread the word about Street Roots?

Purchase additional copies of the newspaper from a local vendor and leave them at your place of work. Maybe it's a break room, or an environment where the public can access the newspaper.

One of the most common ways people find out about Street Roots is stumbling upon it randomly. And, if you've been a longtime reader and supporter, you know, that all it takes is opening the pages of Street Roots to understand there's something special going on.

Introduce Street Roots to peers or at a dinner party. We all have friends that love to read the news or want to understand more about the world where they live. For those friends, don't be afraid to offer an additional copy to them for their enjoyment. Some of our most avid supporters are people who were turned

onto the paper by a friend saying, "Here, read this. It's the real deal."

Explain to peers how the vendor program works, and how one dollar can mean one step toward new start for a Street Roots vendor.

Take a fun and creative photo of you or your friends and family reading Street Roots and post it on social media. Give an example of why Street Roots is in your rotation of reading, and why you might support the vendor and what the paper means to you.

Get a bumper sticker and share them far and wide. Put one on your bike, water bottle, your car or somewhere (legally) that offers the public an opportunity to see that you're a Street Roots reader and supporter.

Vendors will be out and about with the new, "I read Street Roots," stickers. Get yours today by visiting with a local neighborhood vendor.

Street Roots is truly a community newspaper. It's a paper all us can use to understand and educate ourselves on the complexities and positive things happening in our community on the social justice front. Giving a hand up to people experiencing homelessness and poverty by providing the means for an income is at the heart of what we do.

The reality is that readers are as much a part of Street Roots as the vendors, volunteers and the staff. It's a newspaper for the people. Help spread the word.



DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

Israel Bayer is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach him at israel@streetroots.org or follow him on Twitter @israelbayer.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send letters to the editor to the Street Roots office, 211 NW Davis St., Portland, OR 97209, or e-mail to joanne@streetroots.org

Your Love is Maybe More Kind than a Brick in the Teeth (but I am Generous)

by Jeremy Conley

when I am punch drunk you are not
a calm thought to turn
over and over
in my mind
like a smooth stone in my palm;
you are a baseball bat
pulling through the swing
to greet me in a peal of maim
but never death.

when I am weak you are not a steady branch;
you are the box cutter running
the length of my
strings,
to cut the tune in half and
stalk the radio with
discord, clipping burst eardrums.
you are nothing like
cool milk
and fresh bread when I am hungry;
only an empty swallow
scratching its way out
behind rusting gates, slouching
into the thicket.

Our mission

Street Roots creates income opportunities for people experiencing homelessness and poverty by producing a newspaper and other media that are catalysts for individual and social change.

Street Roots publishes every two weeks, launching on Fridays, and is available exclusively through our street vendors or by subscription. We are proud members of the International Network of Street Papers.

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Street Roots Rose City Resource

Street Roots publishes the Rose City Resource, a comprehensive booklet of services for people experiencing homelessness and poverty. To inquire about getting guides, call 503-228-5657. Resources are also available online at www.rosecityresource.org.

Vendors

Street Roots vendors buy the newspapers for 25 cents each and sell them for \$1, keeping the 75 cents in profit for themselves. In order to keep the cost low to our vendors, we receive additional support from donations and in-kind contributions.



75¢
goes directly to the vendor
who sold you the paper

25¢
goes toward
printing costs

Vendor orientations are at 1 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at the Street Roots office.