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Food Stamps? Children Go Hungry

“Are there no prisons? And the workhouses, are they still in operation?”

Is that what the government and the people of the United States are about to say to Americans who have such low incomes they need the government food stamp program to help them put food on their tables?

Most of all, is American society willing to let the 21 million American children – one quarter of all American children – who live in households that get food stamps endure, not just less to eat, but actual hunger?

You recognize the quotation above, I’m sure. It’s uttered with a contemptuous sneer by Charles Dickens’ unforgettable wealthy miser Ebenezer Scrooge in the 1938 film version of Dickens’ classic tale, “A Christmas Carol.”

In his story Dickens used the plight of poor children, especially the poor health of Tiny Tim, the youngest son of Scrooge’s clerk Bob Cratchit, to dramatize the daily emergency the poor face—and the imperative that their well-being is all of humankind’s “business.”

So, especially this year, while Thanksgiving for millions of Americans remains its usual holiday of family cheer and an over-



LAST CHANCE
Lee A. Daniels

abundance of food, millions of food stamp recipients must anticipate they’ll have significantly less to eat this week – and next week, and the week after that, and ...

The reason is twofold. First, on

That program’s expiration has reduced the amount individuals and families get: by \$11 for one person to \$36 for a family of four. The amounts seem small. But for food stamp recipients – the jobless, the disabled, the working poor – who have no financial cushion, the amounts can be the difference between eating and eating less – or not at all.

And now, as Congress considers appropriations for the farm bill, which includes the budget for the food stamp program (its official name is the Supplemental Nutri-

tion Assistance Program, or SNAP), Democrats and Republicans in Congress have suggested two wildly-differing cost-cutting measures for the program. The truly-draconian Republican version would cut \$40 billion from the SNAP over the next decade. The Democratic version proposes a \$4 billion reduction.

Whichever version – or some legislative compromise that meets somewhere between those two poles – wins out, we should not look away from what it will pro-

duce.

Children will go hungry.

From voluminous research, we know that healthy eating helps infants and children properly develop their intellectual, social and emotional skills. Depriving infants and children of nutrients from healthy foods can undermine their ability to do well in school and be able to recognize and adjust to the codes of proper behavior as they grow up.

We know what hunger does to infants and children: it damages them, often for life.

And we know what not going hungry and eating healthy foods does to children: It gives them a chance to live productive lives.

Given the economic challenges America will face over the coming decades, isn’t the wise course to insure that those 21 million children whose parents or guardians receive food stamps continue to have as much chance as possible to contribute to the future American society?

After all, the benefits of combining pragmatism and compassion now are far better for America’s future than pretending that the costs of callousness will not come home to roost.

Are there no prisons? And the workhouses, are they still in operation?
—Ebenezer Scrooge

Nov. 1 Congress let expire a provision of the 2009 economic stimulus package that had increased families’ and individuals’ monthly food stamp allotment to help them cope with the impact of the Great Recession. That crisis had produced a deluge of people – overwhelmingly, the newly jobless and the working poor – to need aid in buying enough food to eat. As a result, the number of food stamp enrollees soared from 26 million in 2007 to more than 47 million now.

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- Apply for the **NeighborhoodLIFT** down payment assistance program for \$15,000 per qualified home loan,¹ available for a limited time to those who purchase a home in the City of Portland
- Learn more about finding and financing a home along with managing the financial responsibilities of homeownership
- Preview area homes for sale

Dates: December 13-14, 2013 **Time:** 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Location: Oregon Convention Center, Hall C
777 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, Portland, OR 97232
Free parking in designated lots, see website for details.
Admission to the event is free!

Get more information and register today at:
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1. This down payment assistance program is available for households earning 120% or less of the area's median income, adjusted for household size, although specific loan products have lower income limits. **NeighborhoodLIFT** funds cannot be used to purchase bank-owned properties being managed by Wells Fargo Premier Asset Services.

2. The **NeighborhoodLIFT** program is a collaborative program of Wells Fargo Bank, N.A., Wells Fargo Foundation, and NeighborWorks America, an independent nonprofit organization.

Although Wells Fargo is the sponsor of the **NeighborhoodLIFT** program, you may seek financing for the remaining balance of the home purchase from any qualified lender who accepts the **NeighborhoodLIFT** down payment assistance program.

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