



Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City Prayer and Action Network

STAYING WARM AND FED THIS WINTER: Cuts from the federal sequestration and Congressional action, or lack thereof, on important budget issues have left many of the most vulnerable among us in even dire straits.

As reported by the Coalition on Human needs, the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association (NEADA) representing the state directors of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) reported that the FY 2013 sequester prevented about 300,000 families from receiving heating or cooling assistance, according to a survey released today. The sequester reduced total funding during this period by about \$155 million from \$3.47 billion to \$3.32 billion.

According to Larry Dawson, chair of NEADA, "the impact of these cuts were especially severe, in light of the close to \$1.8 billion that has been cut from the program since FY 2010, reducing total funding from \$5.1 billion to \$3.32 billion. States are not able to make up the cuts in the program's purchasing power let alone the additional cuts that come with a second sequester".

As a direct result of the sequester, the total number of households receiving home heating assistance declined by 194,000 from 6.9 million in FY 2012 to about 6.7 million in FY 2013 and those receiving cooling assistance declined by about 104,000 from 1.1 million to about 996,000. The sequester cuts were on top of severe cuts in the program that have been enacted since FY 2010. From FY 2010 to FY 2012, total funding was reduced from \$5.1 billion to \$3.47 billion, and then further reduced by the sequester to \$3.3 billion in FY 2013. The impact has been significant. Total number of households receiving assistance has declined by 17% from about 8.1 million in FY 2010 to 6.7 million in FY 2013.

Cuts enacted since FY 2010 have reduced the program's purchasing power from 52.5% of the cost of home heating for the average household to 44% during last year's winter heating season.

The outlook for the coming winter is especially grim since the Energy Information Administration has projected that the average cost of home heating will increase from \$922 last winter heating season to \$977 this winter. For those using natural gas, home heating costs are expected to increase by 13% and the overall average increase among all fuel types is projected to be about 6%. As such, the purchasing power of the program will be further reduced from 44% to 41.5% in FY 2014.

These cuts do not include the second sequester, which could lead to more harmful effects unless Congress takes action to reverse it.

The impact of Nov. 1 reductions to food stamp benefits is even greater: 23 million households, including 22 million children and 9 million who are elderly or have a serious disability. The average monthly cut for a household of four is \$36, further squeezing already tight family budgets. This cut lowers the average benefit to \$1.40 per meal per person, not enough to provide healthy food.

The SNAP cut also affects the economy. The loss of funds flowing to states is estimated at \$5 billion through the end of FY 2014, and \$6 billion in 2015 and 2016 according to Congressional Budget Office. For every dollar in SNAP benefits up to \$1.79 in economic activity is generated. The positive impact of SNAP dollars affects jobs in the agriculture sector and in the production of goods and services, as well as the retail, wholesale and transportation systems that deliver the products. Several House Republicans are now pushing H.R. 3102. This draconian bill cut SNAP by nearly \$40 billion and would result in 3.8 million people being removed from SNAP in 2014.

What can you do? Contact your Congressman and let them know you are a Catholic constituent who believes the federal budget must not be balanced on the backs of the poor. As Pope Francis said, "Among our tasks as witnesses to

the love of Christ is that of giving a voice to the cry of the poor.” You can find and contact your Congressman at <http://governor.utah.gov/goca/representatives.html>.

Catholic Charities USA and Catholic Relief Services are joining forces to support *Caritas Internationalis'* Campaign “One Human Family, Food for All.” The campaign’s focus will raise awareness and encourage action that addresses U.S. and international hunger. Please join us in prayer at noon, local time, **Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2013** for the campaign kickoff. Pledge your prayerful participation at http://support.catholiccharitiesusa.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=12414 See the campaign prayer below.

GREEN TIP OF THE WEEK: **Recycle last year's cards** into this year's gift tags. Use serrated scissors to cut the front of the card into appealing shapes and sizes.

PRAYER: One Human Family, Food for All campaign prayer

O God, you entrusted to us the fruits of all creation so that we might care for the earth and be nourished with its bounty.

You sent us your Son to share our very flesh and blood and to teach us your Law of Love. Through His death and resurrection, we have been formed into one human family.

Jesus showed great concern for those who had no food – even transforming five loaves and two fish into a banquet that served five thousand and many more.

We come before you, O God, conscious of our faults and failures, but full of hope, to share food with all members in this global family.

Through your wisdom, inspire leaders of government and of business, as well as all the world’s citizens, to find just, and charitable solutions to end hunger by assuring that all people enjoy the right to food.

Thus we pray, O God, that when we present ourselves for Divine Judgment, we can proclaim ourselves as “One Human Family” with “Food for All”.

AMEN.