



Food For All

1272 DELAWARE AVENUE
BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14209

“Let not the needy be forgotten.”

(716) 882-7705 • FAX: (716) 882-3797

May/June 2002

Welfare Reform Bill Introduced

—Source: *Bread For the World*

On April 11, 2002, Representatives Marge Roukema (R-NJ) and John Tierney (D-Mass.) introduced a welfare reauthorization bill that will make specific changes to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to help families who are working hard to leave poverty behind. The following changes will enable families to gain long-term self-sufficiency and independence.

The Working from Poverty to Promise Act of 2002 (H.R. 4210) will:

- 1) **Set poverty reduction as a goal of TANF**—(Currently, poverty reduction is not one of the official goals of the TANF program.)
 - Welfare reform success will be measured not just in caseload decline, but in poverty reduction achieved.
 - Funding incentives will be created for states to meet poverty-reduction goals.
- 2) **Boost education and training opportunities**—(One way to ensure TANF recipients have an opportunity to escape poverty is to allow education and training to count as a work activity.)
 - Strengthen TANF recipient and case-worker partnership to help working families achieve long-term self-sufficiency.
 - Expand opportunities for participation in education and training programs.
 - Reward states for helping former welfare recipients get and keep higher paying jobs.
- 3) **Ease time limits and improve welfare to work transition**—(The transition from poverty to self-sufficiency is difficult, and this bill helps make that transition easier for low-income families on TANF.)
 - Remove time limits on benefits for recipients working in low-wage jobs.
 - Recognize disability and mental illness as specific hardships some TANF recipients face in gaining self-sufficiency.
 - Promote more effective case management for TANF recipients experiencing hardships.
 - Allow states greater flexibility to extend waivers on certain TANF rules.
- 4) **Ensure adequate resources for the states**— (States must be given the resources they need to accomplish the goals of TANF.)
 - Increase federal funding each year to keep up with inflation.
 - Increase state TANF funding to match inflation.

Background:

In 1996, President Clinton and Congress approved legislation that was intended to “end welfare as we know it.” The resulting reform law created TANF. Funded by federal block grants to the states, TANF is the nation’s safety net program for low-income families. The current TANF legislation will expire September 30, 2002, and must be reauthorized to remain in effect. The bipartisan Working from Poverty to Promise Act of 2002 will improve key portions of TANF.

Take Action Now

Write a letter to your member of Congress (in your own words) asking for improvements in the TANF (Temporary Assistance For Needy Families) program.

Sample Letter:

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Date _____

Dear Rep. _____,

.....

I urge you to strengthen the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program by cosponsoring the Roukema-Tierney Working from Poverty to Promise Act of 2002, H.R. 4210.

.....

Moving from poverty to self-sufficiency is not easy. People who are working hard to leave poverty behind need specific assistance, such as education and job training, to make sure their wages enable them to feed their families. Improvements in TANF that focus on reducing poverty rather than on simply reducing caseloads are a good investment. Please do everything in your power to support a stronger TANF program for America’s low-income families.

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Sincerely,

Your Name _____

Your Address _____

.....

Send your letter to:

Representative _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Congregations Invited to Participate in Anti-Hunger Activities

One of Food For All's goals for 2002 is to involve more congregations in anti-hunger advocacy activities. Working together we can accomplish much more than working alone. Opportunities for participation include:

- **Designating a contact person** who (1) receives the Food For All newsletter, (2) publicizes information about the annual Faith and Hunger Conference and other activities, and (3) distributes educational material about the problem of hunger and specific actions to be taken.
- **Appointing a representative to serve on the Food For All Public Policy Committee.** The committee meets monthly (except December, July, and August) to plan the annual Spring Faith & Hunger Conference and a Fall event, meet with legislators about hunger issues, maintain the HOTLINE Telephone Tree, provide suggestions for the Food For All newsletter, and other activities as needed throughout the year.
- **Organizing a letter-writing campaign** so that members of the congregation have an opportunity to write a letter to a legislator about a specific hunger-related bill.
- **Joining the HOTLINE Telephone Tree**—participants receive a phone call a maximum of 4-6 times per year, asking them to call a specific legislator about a hunger-related bill. The HOTLINE is activated when there is not enough time to write a letter; i.e., when a vote on important legislation is imminent.
- **Financially supporting the work of Food For All** to ensure the continuation of the important work of advocacy, education, and outreach on behalf of people living in poverty in Western New York and beyond.

In addition to the newsletter and educational opportunities, Food For All provides resources for interested congregations upon request, including visits to Social Concerns and other interested committees, "Minute For Mission" presentations, etc. To indicate your congregation's interest and commitment to ending hunger, please complete the form below and return.

COUNT US IN!! My congregation wants to make a difference by joining efforts with *FOOD FOR ALL*— We will:

<input type="checkbox"/> Appoint a representative to serve on the Public Policy Committee <input type="checkbox"/> Organize a Letter Writing Campaign <input type="checkbox"/> We would like additional information. Please call.	<input type="checkbox"/> Join the HOTLINE Telephone Tree <input type="checkbox"/> Financially support the work of Food For All. Our contribution of \$_____ is enclosed.
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Congregation _____ Address _____ _____ Zip _____ Phone _____	Contact Person _____ Address _____ _____ Zip _____ Phone _____
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Please return to: Food For All, 1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209-2496



Food For All

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