



# California Hunger Action Coalition

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Press Release

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## California is Turning Down Money to Fight Hunger

**“Accept the Checks!” is an event at the Governor’s San Francisco Office in response to a new report that finds California is the nation’s worst state in providing people with food assistance during the economic slump. Legislative solutions proposed.**

SAN FRANCISCO – At 10 a.m. on Friday, May 30th at 455 Golden Gate, Downtown San Francisco, hunger advocates will ask the Governor Gray Davis’ office to accept two “checks” totaling **\$81 million** -- money that would be available if the Governor supported efforts to reform the State’s Food Stamp Program to cut costs and pull down more federal dollars. Advocates from the California Hunger Action Coalition (CHAC) will present the oversized “checks” and hand deliver “million dollar bills” to the Governor’s San Francisco Office.

Currently California is the worst state in the nation when it comes to enrolling people in food stamps during the recent economic slowdown -- despite an above average unemployment rate. This failure has cost the State, the food industry, and people in need close to **\$1 billion dollars**. Governor Davis’ reluctance to support efforts to reform the Food Stamps Program means less food and more hunger among low-income families.

“I don’t understand how the Governor is not doing everything he can to bring federal food assistance to hungry families in California,” said

Artensia Barry, Berkeley resident and member of the California Hunger Action Coalition for the past five years.

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The checks will be delivered by representatives of the California Hunger Action Coalition, The Alameda County Community Food Bank, The San Francisco Food Bank, California Food Policy Advocates, St. Anthony's Foundation, families, seniors, emergency food providers, and advocates.

"As both California government and California families struggle to balance their budgets, we must take advantage of these win-win opportunities to save money, boost our economy, and upgrade our food assistance programs," said Assemblymember Darrell Steinberg, author of A.B 231, the "Save Money, Cut Hunger Act" at a recent rally coordinated by the Coalition.

A recent California Hunger Action Coalition report found:

- Over the last two years, California's unemployment rate has risen to 6.9%, a higher rate and a larger increase than the national averages. But, while national participation in the Food Stamp Program has risen 22.5% (nearly 4 million new people), California's change in participation was the worst in the nation. While the national average increased 9.1%, California *fell* -4.4%.
- The Food Stamp Program is the nation's number one defense against hunger, providing an average of \$83 in food benefits each month to people in need. But as a result of its flat participation trends, the State has lost an estimated **\$356 million in federal benefits** and a resulting **\$655 million in economic impact** on California grocers, farmers and the food industry. The full report can be found at: <http://www.hungeraction.net/media/>
- A.B. 231, introduced by Assemblymember Darrell Steinberg, would end fingerprinting (**saving the State \$11 million**); offer transitional food benefits worth **\$70 million in federal dollars** to people leaving welfare; encourage alternatives to face-to-face interviews of applicants in some circumstances; and adjust the limits on cars to allow for a reasonably valued vehicle.

*The California Hunger Action Coalition (CHAC) is a broad-based membership organization of food program providers, consumers, and anti-hunger advocates from throughout the state. United in their belief that access to adequate, nutritious and safe food is a fundamental human right, the coalition advocates for freedom from hunger for all Californians. [www.hungeraction.net](http://www.hungeraction.net)*

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