

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 25, 2008

Senator Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell,

We are concerned by recent reports that the draft economic stimulus package may not include an increase for the Food Stamp program. If these accounts are accurate, we urge you to reconsider and encourage you to include a significant increase in Food Stamp benefits for current recipients in the final package. Many experts have indicated that such an increase would be one of the most effective ways to stimulate the economy, in addition to addressing the well-documented needs of low-income Americans. Increasing Food Stamps provides a high per-dollar benefit to the economy and we hope that the final stimulus package will put a priority on this and other high-impact programs.

As you probably know, the Senate Finance Committee heard testimony earlier this week from Congressional Budget Office Director Peter R. Orszag that extra Food Stamp benefits are likely to be spent quickly after their receipt, providing a more immediate stimulus. Experts have cited returns of around \$1.73 for every \$1.00 invested in the program, making this a cost-effective proposal. In addition, these benefits go to the Americans likely to be hit the hardest by turbulent economic times.

Further, the House and Senate each overwhelmingly passed comprehensive increases and improvements to the Food Stamp program as part of a Farm Bill last year. Given the tight financial constraints on new spending for the farm bill, these parallel increases are a testament to the pressing needs and value of the program. Clearly, there is strong bipartisan support for an increased investment in Food Stamps in the long-term. A short-term increase in a stimulus package would therefore have the double benefit of more quickly making up some of the gap created over the last decade as Food Stamp benefits have eroded.

We understand that there are a number of proposals to stimulate the economy, and we hope you will make increased Food Stamp benefits a significant piece of the final legislation.

Sincerely,





Barack Sanders

Ron Wyden

Carl Levin

Susan M. Collins

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Pat Toomey

Bob Casey, Jr.

Chris Dodd

Robert Menendez

Dick Durbin

Herb Kohl

John Reed

Jon Lieber

Shirley

Barbara Boxer

Allye Stewart

Frank R. Lautenberg