



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information contact:
Rhonda Sanders 501.399.9999
501.680.6487
rsanders@arhungeralliance.org

Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance says that April 1 is a big day for the Economic Recovery Act and for low-income families in Arkansas.

LITTLE ROCK, ARK. (*April 1, 2009*) — The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance (The Alliance), the statewide association of food banks, food pantries and shelters, and hunger advocates in the state, is encouraged by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP formerly known as Food Stamps) benefit increase that goes into effect today. As a key element of the economic recovery package, this increase will provide a big economic boost to communities across the state and will help struggling families put food on the table, just weeks after President Obama signed the package into law.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is designed to stimulate the economy by bolstering consumption by individuals, businesses, and government. Its temporary SNAP benefit increase will take effect nationwide beginning on April 1. It will provide \$19 billion in added benefits over the next several years, \$63 million of this will be delivered between April and September 2009 here in Arkansas.

The Agriculture Department estimates that every \$1 in food stamps expands the economy by \$1.84, and that the added benefits will save or create 100,000 jobs over the next two years. It

is estimated the economic boost Arkansas will receive from the benefit increase over the April - September 2009 period is approximately \$120 million dollars.

“This benefit increase comes at a critical time for so many Arkansas families. While Arkansas has fared better than most states, there are still thousands of working Arkansans who have lost their jobs and will need help,” says Rhonda Sanders, Executive Director of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. “Not only will this help families put food on the table but it will keep the money circulating out in communities across the state. This is a win-win for Arkansas,” continues Sanders.

These benefits will go to many of the people who are having the hardest time making ends meet during the recession. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is designed to respond quickly and effectively to economic downturns: enrollment expands automatically to support the larger number of low-income families and communities when the economy weakens and contracts when the economy recovers. According to the Arkansas Department of Human Services enrollment data individuals receiving benefits has increased from 378,949 in January 2008 to 399,347 in January 2009. This is a 5% increase in the past year. “We are very excited about this opportunity for our state and we want to make sure everyone is aware of these increased benefits,” says Sanders.

This data comes from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and from the Department of Human Services monthly COORS Reports.