



To: Obama/Biden Transition USDA Review Team

From: Joel Berg, Executive Director, New York City Coalition Against Hunger

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Subject: **Administrative Actions the Administration Can Rapidly Take to Slash Hunger**

On January 21, 1961, John F. Kennedy's very first action as President was to sign an executive order implementing a pilot Food Stamp Program (which Congress had previously authorized but President Eisenhower had refused to implement) and increasing the distribution of excess commodities to hungry Americans. Similarly, President Obama and Secretary Vilsack will have historic opportunities to take the following administrative actions in their very first days in office in order to start achieving the Administration's goal of ending U.S. child hunger by 2015:

- 1) Make an immediate, mass purchase of "bonus buy" surplus commodities for distribution to hungry Americans, using existing "Section 32" funds.
- 2) Re-establish the government-wide Food Recovery and Gleaning Initiative (see: <http://www.usda.gov/news/pubs/gleaning/content.htm>) and the Community Food Security Initiative (see: http://attra.ncat.org/guide/a_m/cfsi.html). Led by the USDA Secretary and his staff on behalf of the President, these initiatives worked government-wide to fight hunger and bolster small and medium-size farmers by recovering excess food, promoting projects that strengthened local food systems (such as farmers' markets, community gardens, and community-supported agriculture projects), increasing the use of federal nutrition assistance programs, and promoting food-related economic development projects.
- 3) Ensuring that the President's Faith-Based and Community Initiative (or any similar initiative launched by the Obama Administration) include a serious focus on ending domestic hunger and slashing poverty. The effort should aid secular and faith-based agencies evenly and be run in accordance with President-elect Obama's pledge to prohibit discrimination and proselytization.

4) Increase SNAP participation by: banning finger-imaging as a application requirement; encouraging more states to use categorical eligibility to increase income levels in the program and eliminate the assets caps; creating a better functioning national 800 line for applications; requiring states and counties to better meet application processing deadlines; and doing more to encourage online applications and phone interviews.

5) Increase school meals participation by extending to other municipalities the pilot authority Philadelphia is using to reduce paperwork and by actively encouraging school systems to serve breakfast in first period classrooms.

6) Re-launch USDA AmeriCorps anti-hunger national service projects.