



To: Obama/Biden Transition USDA Review Team

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

Date: December 22, 2008

Subject: Communications/Public Liaison Strategies to Fight Hunger

I suggest that the Obama/Biden Administration use the following communications and public liaison strategies to fight hunger:

1) Launch Communication Campaign: “We Made It on SNAP” – Partially because of stigma against participation, about one-third of the Americans eligible to receive SNAP benefits currently don’t receive them. Given that Obama will be the first President in history to have lived in a family that received food stamps (now SNAP) benefits, he is uniquely positioned to lead an effort to dramatically reduce that stigma. I suggest that he invite to the White House prominent Americans (entertainers, sports stars, elected officials, Nobel Prize winners, etc.) who also grew up in families that needed food stamps, to stress how accepting help enables your family to prosper in the long run. While there, they could also film a PSA with the theme “We Made It on SNAP.”

2) MLK Day of Service – The Transition Team has already announced that President-elect Obama will perform community service on that day; it would be helpful if his service was hunger-related. Perhaps Vice-President-elect Biden and Secretary-Designate Vilsack could also perform anti-hunger service on that day.

3) School Breakfast Visits – Since only about twenty percent of the children nationwide who are eligible for free and reduced-price school breakfast currently receive them, the President and First Lady should each visit at least one School Breakfast Program site to encourage participation. Secretary Vilsack should continuously visit such sites during his travels around the nation.

4) National Anti-Hunger Community Empowerment Hubs – The Obama Administration should use web sites and listservs to create local citizen hubs to actively engage Americans in volunteering to fight hunger, improving the quality of meals in their children’s schools, supporting Administration anti-hunger proposals, etc.