

Area Feeding America Food Banks' Joint Statement on the Impact of a Government Shutdown on Food Insecurity

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The holiday season is here. It's a time of year for heightened joy and merriment. It's also a time of year for increased struggle and stress, especially for the 222,070 Nebraskans and western lowans facing hunger and food insecurity, according to Feeding America. Last week, a U.S. Department of Agriculture study reported food insecurity in Nebraska is 12.1 percent, which exceeds the national average of 11.2 percent.

We take great pride in our low unemployment rates. Yet, we consistently deny opportunities for hardworking Nebraskans and western lowans to thrive. We block pathways that lead to hope and improved opportunity, not only for the individual or family but for the benefit of the greater good...The Good Life.

A looming government shutdown and record inflation compound concerns of hunger and instability. This time of year, many families and individuals feel added strain. They are confronted with decisions about which bills to pay: heat and electricity, childcare, medical, rent, fuel, food. These are basic needs essential to be healthy and contribute fully to our society.

A government shutdown will bring uncertainty to more than 6,400 families in Nebraska and western Iowa. Food Bank of Lincoln and Food Bank for the Heartland, which serve all 93 counties of Nebraska, as well as 16 counties in western Iowa, will do all we can to serve our communities, but the food and funds we have on hand can only go so far.

A government shutdown would neglect active-duty military members and many people who work for a federal agency or contractor from receiving their expected paychecks in mid-December, potentially jeopardizing their ability to put food on the table and cover other household expenses.

A shutdown could also disrupt vital food assistance programs like the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). If a shutdown extends until January, it will jeopardize critical anti-hunger programs including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which helps 434,300 people in Nebraska and Iowa put food on the table and channels investment into local communities.

Congress must avoid a shutdown to ensure millions of people can continue to access food. The need is real. Why are our leaders' actions during this holiday season—a season intended to celebrate peace, love and promise—in opposition to those values?

The Food Banks, with generosity from donors and partners, remain committed to our hungry neighbors. We encourage anyone who thinks they might be impacted by a shutdown to find more information at lincolnfoodbank.org (Food Bank of Lincoln) and foodbankheartland.org (Food Bank for the Heartland).

If you need food, we will make use of the resources available to serve you. We ask the same of our political leaders; avoid a shutdown and keep the federal government at work.