

January 2021 Advocacy Update

Nevada Legislature:

The legislative session will open virtually on February 1st with most of the time being spent on balancing the budget, health care, some criminal justice reforms, education and health care. This session is not expected to produce any sweeping policy changes or expensive new programs. It is possible the session will convert to in person in late March or early April. It will depend on when a majority of legislators and staff can get access to a vaccine. The number of bills that get hearings will be substantially lower than in prior sessions.

FBNN has been working with Senator Julie Ratti to revisit the 2017 bill to lift the SNAP drug felon ban. Under current law, if a client applies for SNAP, and they have a drug felony conviction after 1996, they must provide a certificate they have completed an approved treatment plan to receive benefits. Drug felonies are the only convictions singled out. This bill removes the requirement for DWSS to ask the client if they have a drug felony.

Three Square is bringing forward a proposal through a committee bill to create a food purchase program similar to the TEFAP program operated by the USDA. Their bill authorizes the Nevada Department of Agriculture to create the fund and would enable the department to appropriate money for the program. We have been working with Three Square and NDA on this concept for the past year. The Nevada Department of Agriculture has placed a line item in the department budget for 1 million. The future of the budget request is murky right now.

Federal Updates:

It is looking like the process to reauthorize the Farm Bill and Child Nutrition programs are going to start in 2021.

In the Farm Bill, we are seeking a permanent 15% increase in monthly SNAP benefits for all recipients, as well as rolling back changes made to work requirements approved under President Trump. We have asked that Las Vegas be included in the listening tours when it is safe for members of Congress to travel again.

For child nutrition, the ask is to streamline the program regulations so after school meals and summer food will operate under the same reporting requirements and reimbursement rates. We are also seeking the flexibilities to allow states to permanently waive the congregate meal requirement and flexible mealtimes.

Feeding America and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities have been including FBNN in their conversations with the Biden Administration on strategies to strengthen SNAP, work with the USDA to improve access to school meals for distance learners and continue to grant the states flexibilities for after school and summer food where it is possible. Some of the waivers that expire in September 2021 and December 2021 will require Congressional action to extend or make permanent.

2021 Legislative Priorities for Feeding America:

When possible, we will work with Feeding America to achieve their policy priorities in 2021. Those include:

- Ensure strong funding for federal nutrition programs in the FY22 appropriations.
- Address military hunger through a basic needs allowance through the annual NDAA
- Improve funding and access to child nutrition programs, including summer food
- Support more effective tax giving incentives that provide balanced and cost-effective incentives to encourage additional charitable giving.
- Support tax incentives that provide families with additional economic resources, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit.

Other updates:

Stacy Dean, formerly the Vice President of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has been appointed Deputy Undersecretary for Food and Nutrition at the USDA. Over the last six years, FBNN has developed a strong relationship with Stacy. This is great news. The recent executive orders issued by President Biden regarding food security are a result of her appointment.

2020 successes:

Some of the bigger successes from 2020 include:

- Getting Pandemic EBT approved to help parents recover the cost of lost school meals
- Getting the SNAP interview waiver for SNAP extended beyond August
- Developing stronger working relationships with the Nevada Department of Agriculture, the Washoe County School District, and Nevada Division of Welfare.

