

**FRANK R. WOLF**  
10TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA



233 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4610  
(202) 225-5136

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

November 19, 2013

13873 PARK CENTER ROAD  
SUITE 130  
HERNDON, VA 20171  
(703) 709-5800  
(800) 945-9653 (IN STATE)

110 NORTH CAMERON STREET  
WINCHESTER, VA 22601  
(540) 667-0990  
(800) 850-3463 (IN STATE)

[wolf.house.gov](http://wolf.house.gov)

The Honorable Terry McAuliffe  
Governor-elect  
Commonwealth of Virginia  
PO Box 426  
Richmond VA 23219

Dear Governor-elect McAuliffe:

As you begin to assemble your cabinet, I write in hopes that you will prioritize the important issue of hunger in Virginia, and to let you know that I stand ready to assist your administration in this area.

Sadly, too many people go hungry in the United States. According to the USDA, 49 million Americans – including 16 million children – are food insecure. As the holidays approach, we need to recognize the need for food donations throughout the year, not just at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

The federal government presently provides roughly 96 percent of the money spent on food assistance; private charities provide the rest. Given our nation's current fiscal woes, this is unsustainable. While it is important for the government to continue to provide a safety net for those who fall on hard times, the simple reality is that until we fully address our nation's exploding debt and deficit, further cuts to discretionary spending are all but inevitable. As you are aware, stimulus-level food stamp spending expired on November 1, which will translate into a reduction of roughly \$5 billion in SNAP spending for fiscal year 2014. These changes are independent of any potential fluctuations to the program that may result from those being considered by the Farm Bill conferees. This is already having an impact on food banks in my region, and I anticipate our state will see the same effects.

This is a serious yet solvable problem that we can tackle at no cost to taxpayers. In our home state of Virginia, we have made great strides in alleviating hunger through initiatives on both the state and federal level that I hope we can continue under your leadership.

For example, programs like the "Governor's Bowl" food and fund drive has allowed business communities across the state to take part in a friendly competition aimed at helping meet the needs of local food banks and pantries during the summer months, when donations are typically at their lightest. The Legal Food Frenzy, another program, has produced more than 8.5 million pounds of food through the efforts of the Attorney General of Virginia, the Young Lawyers Division of the Virginia Bar Association and the Federation of Virginia Food Banks.

The Scouting for Food program is also extremely successful, and I have also seen that regularly meeting with local food banks and pantries to discuss their needs is beneficial.

Other ideas include:

- Designate one person in your office to serve as the food bank/pantry coordinator so there would be one point of contact who would be responsible for working with the food banks and pantries across the state. With the growing demand for food, it has become nearly impossible for food bank workers to do any outreach, so the point of contact would be charged with keeping the “need” in the news.
- Have one of your agencies develop a central “one-stop” Web site for all food banks and pantries to provide information for donors, volunteers and clients, which would centralize information and provide a platform where people could learn more about needed items and how to get involved. It would also include contact information, links to each food bank/pantry’s site, a summary of each food bank’s unique services and needs, a map of where each food bank/pantry is located, and “real time” information on food shortages in each part of the state for churches, civic groups, the business community and the press to access.
- Pledge to end hunger by calling on all state agencies, schools, businesses, churches and civic organizations to commit to participating in a rolling food drive to re-stock the shelves of local food pantries. For example, schools could donate in the late winter, churches and civic organizations in the spring, businesses in the summer and state agencies in the fall. Currently, there is a large influx of food during the holiday season but shelves are often empty in the spring and summer months as people turn attention elsewhere. This would ensure a rolling system of food donations.
  - Have your Secretary of Administration develop a program for state employees similar to the highly successful Fed’s Feeds Families program that just this year collected a record-breaking 9 million pounds of food, up from 7.2 million in 2012.
  - Have your Secretary of Agriculture incentivize farmers to set aside land for the purpose of gleaning and allowing it to be qualified as a charitable gift, and have farmers set aside an acre of their land for the local Scout group to cultivate and then donate to an area food bank.
  - Have your Secretary of Education ask each school hold one or two food drives and donate unused cafeteria food to local food banks.
  - Have your Secretary of Commerce ask the Chambers of Commerce, major corporations and small businesses around the state to hold food drives, or “adopt” a local food bank. Honor those organizations that donate the most food and develop a marketing campaign to raise public awareness. If successful, this could become an annual event.

- Take a leadership role in educating schools about the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act, which protects schools from liability issues they used to fear if they gave away unused food, and allows donations of excess food to local pantries. In 2011, language that I authored was signed into law making this explicitly clear – schools can donate food without fear of liability. The purpose of the law is simple – keep excess school food out of the garbage and get it to our food banks – and it has already proven successful in places like the Blue Valley School District in Kansas, which has been leading the way with their innovative school recovery program that puts this law into action. A short video summarizing their efforts may be found at [http:// wolf.house.gov/foodrecovery](http://wolf.house.gov/foodrecovery).

Most recently, on the federal level, I introduced a proposal that is currently moving through Congress that would create a congressional commission aimed at alleviating hunger in the United States. The bipartisan group would develop recommendations to encourage public-private partnerships and greater involvement from community and faith-based groups to reduce the need for government nutrition programs while still providing a safety net for the most vulnerable and hungry. The proposal has been endorsed by Alliance to End Hunger, Bread for the World and Feeding America.

Today, I wrote a similar letter to the governors of all 50 states in hopes they will adopt some of these initiatives to curb hunger in their states. While the coming weeks will see an influx in food donations due to the American tradition of charity during the holidays, we must be mindful of how scant resources become after the New Year. These are but a few examples that barely scratch the surface. There are so many ways we can combat the pervasive yet solvable hunger problem that exists all over the country, and you should feel free to contact my staff in Washington if you would like more information. I look forward to working with you.

Best wishes.

Sincerely

Frank R. Wolf  
Member of Congress

This would help with  
the hunger problem in Virginia.  
1/1/14