



# TRANSCRIPT

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FARM BILL FORUM

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NUTRITION FORUM SOUTHWEST REGION

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NOVEMBER 1, 2005

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17 PLACE HELD: Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center,

18 Austin, Texas

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20 TIME HELD: 1:00 p.m.

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1 FARM BILL NUTRITION FORUM - SOUTHWEST REGION

2 NOVEMBER 1, 2005

3 1:00 P.M.

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13:09 5 MR. BOST: We are the agency in the  
6 federal government that's directly responsible for  
7 managing the nutrition programs, right now in this  
8 country serving about (inaudible) million.

9 (Inaudible) and about 65 percent of all  
13:09 10 USDA. This is a forum for us to have the opportunity  
11 to listen to you as we prepare our recommendations for  
12 the '07 farm rule.

13 I think (inaudible). This is our  
14 ninth, and there will be one in Atlanta tomorrow and  
13:09 15 one in Carolina the 17th of this month. All of the  
16 USDA will have had almost one in, I believe, every  
17 state. And that was done on purpose. It was done on  
18 purpose because we were interested in making sure that  
19 people had an opportunity to share with us their

13:09 20 ideas -- their recommendations, as they relate to,  
21 one, the Farm Bureau as a whole but, two, specifically  
22 the programs that are part of nutrition types of the  
23 Farm Bureau who are the largest enforcement among  
24 distribution programs who people can (inaudible)

13:09 25 reservations, farmers markets programs, because we

1 felt that it was critical that you have an opportunity  
2 to share your thoughts and suggestions as we take this  
3 time to put our thoughts on paper that we will discuss  
4 with Congress when they take this under debate.

13:09 5 This is an opportunity for you. This  
6 is not a conversation or a dialogue or we will answer  
7 questions. This is an opportunity for you to share  
8 with us what your thoughts are. There may be  
9 instances where I will ask a question or two in terms  
13:09 10 of seeking some level of clarification with you. More  
11 importantly I'm here to listen to what you have to  
12 say.

13 (Inaudible) but the real beauty of that  
14 program came to fruition over the course of the last  
13:09 15 several months as this country and nation suffered  
16 through some of the worst national disasters that we  
17 have ever experienced. It did exactly what it was  
18 supposed to do -- in terms of being able to respond  
19 timely, appropriately, quickly, seamlessly in terms of  
13:09 20 getting food to people that are hungry and in need.

21 In addition to that there are other  
22 programs that worked very well. And it worked very  
23 well because of the partnership that I believe that we  
24 have with several members of the USDA FNS.

13:10 25 And I see that many of them are

1 scheduled to speak, and I want to thank them for the  
2 outstanding work that they have done in terms of  
3 working with us and in terms of meeting with these  
4 people that are -- we could not have done what we were  
13:10 5 able to do so quickly if it had not been for your  
6 partnership. And I'm here to thank you. It is very  
7 greatly appreciated.

8                   That has been shared with the  
9 President. I've talked with the Chairman and  
13:10 10 Secretary yesterday when we had a conversation, and so  
11 they both sent me their thanks and heir  
12 congratulations. It did, that partnership, what it  
13 was supposed to do. And I want you to know how  
14 sincerely I appreciate our (inaudible) what we've done  
13:10 15 and what we hope to be able to do in the future.

16                   Bill Ludwig I have with me today. I'm  
17 pleased to have my deputy, Kate Coler. We don't get  
18 to travel too much together (inaudible). That's --  
19 I'm happy to be back home.

13:11 20                   And Bill Ludwig, who is regional  
21 administrator, and his deputy is here, and also staff  
22 from our original office. As I said, it's an  
23 opportunity for you to talk with us about the Bill.

24                   What will happen, the following will  
13:11 25 take place. We will take the information, you will

1 roll it up, we'll put it on our website at the end of  
2 this year or next year so that you can see and have an  
3 opportunity to read what other people have said around  
4 the country. Interestingly enough, the comments can  
13:11 5 be very, very similar.

6 We will take that information, and over  
7 the course of the next year or so we will look at it  
8 and make some determinations about what  
9 recommendations that we want to make.

13:11 10 I can already tell you that there are a  
11 couple of guiding principles that are important to me  
12 that will continue for as long as I'm under  
13 secretary.

14 First and foremost, we are very  
13:12 15 interested in insuring that people that are eligible  
16 to participate in our programs have the opportunity to  
17 do so. One, easy access to those programs and, two,  
18 while concurrent, our partners that have the  
19 responsibility for implementing the programs, that  
13:12 20 they are able to do easily. And last, but not least,  
21 that we maintain a high level of integrity.

22 So those are some things that are there  
23 governing constantly as we look in going down the road  
24 and into the future in terms of making some decisions  
13:12 25 about where we are.

1 I'm pleased to be here with you today.  
2 I'm happy to come back to Texas. This is my second  
3 home. If American Airlines could ever get those  
4 flights on time from Dallas to Austin I'd be even  
13:12 5 happier.

6 I was telling my staff that it took --  
7 I could have gone from D.C. to London for as long as  
8 it took me to get from D.C. to Austin today. It did  
9 take a long time but I'm happy to be here.

13:13 10 So with that, Mr. Ludwig?

11 MR. LUDWIG: Thank you. This is a real  
12 opportunity for you to be able to talk to the under  
13 secretary and the deputy secretary at one time. I can  
14 tell you over the last four years I can't think of but  
13:13 15 maybe one other time where I had both together in the  
16 same room, that that doesn't happen often, plus we  
17 have (inaudible) with us today also.

18 There's a couple of ground rules that  
19 we've established just so the process will flow a  
13:13 20 little bit smoother. We have some numbers. Each of  
21 you who has registered to speak, we have given you a  
22 number. If there's someone in the audience that wants  
23 to speak and you don't have a number, please go to the  
24 front desk and register.

13:13 25 We have two podiums set up, two chairs

1 behind each podium. We will hold up the number that  
2 will correspond to you. When we do that, we ask that  
3 you go to one of the vacant chairs and have a seat.  
4 When the first person finishes speaking then it will  
13:14 5 be your turn. We ask that you please turn off your  
6 cell phones.

7                   We have a three-minute time rule but we  
8 are going to relax that a bit. We are going to ask  
9 that you not go on very long over three minutes. I  
13:14 10 have a lady here that's kind of timing everybody. We  
11 want to make sure that everybody gets to speak, but  
12 based on the number of people that we have signed up  
13 so far we think that we'll be able to relax that a  
14 minute or a minute and a half.

13:14 15                   But if do you go over she will hold up  
16 a sign and ask you to stop and if you do not then I  
17 will ask you to please stop.

18                   MR. BOST: Does he have it up there?  
19 Is it going to be on the (inaudible)?

13:15 20                   MR. LUDWIG: We have some drinks  
21 available through the store. And the rest rooms are  
22 also here. Okay. Any questions before we begin?  
23 Okay.

24                   If we can, the first speaker is -- we  
13:15 25 ask for written comments. Some people want to submit

1 written comments. Some people did. If you have  
2 written comments we ask that you please give those to  
3 us. If you don't want to speak and you have written  
4 comments we'll still take your written comments and it  
13:15 5 will be part of the official record.

6 MS. RATH: Mr. Secretary, welcome back  
7 to Texas. Having served with you it's very nice to  
8 have you back, and it's good to have you and everyone  
9 with you.

13:15 10 For the record, I am Diane Rath. I'm  
11 with the Texas Workforce Commission. And we very much  
12 appreciate.

13 As my perspective might be a little bit  
14 different because most of us will be speaking about  
13:15 15 nutritional components, we're going to focus our  
16 comments on the food staff and employment training  
17 portion of it.

18 And we appreciate the flexibility that  
19 the states have to establishing the patient  
13:16 20 requirements for this program. And we think it's  
21 important and consistent that the department's  
22 responsibility to the (inaudible) act of 1996, Texas  
23 has fully integrated our FSENT program with all of our  
24 other programs and work force issues.

13:16 25 As you know we have 28 local work

1 forces in the state. We have over 280 work force  
2 interns in this state, and they have done a very good  
3 job of serving recipients and job seekers through all  
4 of our federal programs.

13:16 5 And that integrated system really  
6 allows us to (inaudible) federal and state funding  
7 streams and that allows us, as the counties served, to  
8 really meet the need of Texans that are entering or  
9 returning to work.

13:16 10 In Texas we believe that the true  
11 measure of compassion is not how many people receive  
12 government assistance but, much more importantly, how  
13 few people need it.

14 Unfortunately that's not how the Food  
13:17 15 Stamp program is structured. The high performance  
16 (inaudible) this program reward administrative  
17 processes and give absolutely no consideration to  
18 outcome measures that will support the goals and  
19 increase the family's efficiency.

13:17 20 Focus on the outcomes will produce  
21 better results from families. They have better role  
22 models for children and improving their lives both  
23 when they're young and as they grow up.

24 We are clearly (inaudible) families  
13:17 25 self-sufficiency as a top priority. And we recommend

1 performance bonus criteria be modified to the  
2 (inaudible) state that succeed in helping Food Stamp  
3 recipients transition to, one, and, two, self  
4 sufficiency.

13:17 5 We also strongly believe that the Food  
6 Stamp ENT funds will produce maximum results if states  
7 are allowed to make the requirements compatible with  
8 those of the other employment and training programs.

9 For a family of ten Congress has  
13:18 10 established only one exemption to the work  
11 requirement. Food Stamps (inaudible). Ideally Texas  
12 would like the Food Stamp ENT to more closely mirror  
13 communities which -- so that more people are  
14 participating in work programs and moving more quickly  
13:18 15 to employment and to full self sufficiency.

16 In Texas, our tenant requirements have  
17 been a powerful motivator to get our recipients  
18 meeting their work requirements and beginning that  
19 quick journey to self sufficiency.

13:18 20 But 83 percent of adults who need  
21 (inaudible) remain on Food Stamps. And because  
22 provisions of Food Stamps are so much more imminent  
23 when it comes to employment, the motivation and the  
24 mental work and fully achieved self sufficiency  
13:19 25 frequently grinds to a halt.

1                   Additionally in Texas TANA (phonetic)  
2 provides a full family distinction, if any member of  
3 the household fails to comply with the work  
4 requirements, this policy has been a very effective  
13:19 5 tool in insuring cooperation and full participation.

6                   We believe the lining with the Food  
7 Stamp requirements with those will greatly improve the  
8 employment outcomes for Food Stamp employment and  
9 training since our populations are so closely  
13:19 10 related.

11                   By streamlining the Food Stamp ENT  
12 criteria and allowing states to align them with other  
13 employment and training programs, it will not only  
14 help the job seeker transition to work, but also  
13:19 15 provide much needed support services such as work  
16 related payments and transportation so that these  
17 individuals can remain employed and, very importantly,  
18 climb that career ladder.

19                   We provided detailed written comments  
13:20 20 on these points and others. We really appreciate your  
21 meeting here in Texas and providing this opportunity,  
22 and we look forward to working with you as we look  
23 forward into reorganization. And we might answer any  
24 questions you might have.

13:20 25                   MR. DOMAN: Secretary, I'm James

1 Doman. I want to comment on the senior profit market  
2 program. I'm the director of the East Arkansas Area  
3 Agency on Aging for Arkansas.

4 Our (inaudible) is 12,000, primarily  
13:20 5 River Delta down in east Arkansas. They are very  
6 rural, very agricultural, and very poor.

7 We've participated in the Farmers  
8 Market Program since 2001. This year our grant is  
9 about 87,500. With that we're working with 1900  
13:21 10 elderly individuals, and we have 39 farmers or farmers  
11 market organizations that are involved in the  
12 program.

13 We add eight percent into the program  
14 as far as the cash goes, money for purchases of  
13:21 15 vegetables, as well as we cover the admin costs as far  
16 as cash goes, and the time that's involved in those  
17 programs. And we're glad to do it. We're very  
18 supportive of the program. It's a huge, huge success  
19 in our area.

13:21 20 So I would say first we authorized the  
21 program, and preferably on a permanent basis. And I'd  
22 say we're supportive of leaving as much latitude as we  
23 possible can in the proposed ruled.

24 I think it's a good thing that the  
13:22 25 amount should be distributed to individuals as

1 variable according to how it's determined locally. I  
2 think that it's a good thing that the eligibility can  
3 be set at different levels if you desire, or that you  
4 can target particular farm stocks. All of those  
13:22 5 things are good.

6 We feel that you should leave as much  
7 local determination in the process as you possibly  
8 can.

9 Second, it's going to be a real  
13:22 10 challenge to increase funding, if at all possible.  
11 Everybody wins in the program. You're familiar with  
12 all the positives and increased nutrition. But  
13 economic development, and where I'm from, you're  
14 talking about maybe small farmers, it helps develop a  
13:23 15 market for them.

16 Often they're retired from one or  
17 another industry that's gone south, or the shoe  
18 factory is closed, and they're doing a small farming  
19 operation and it really, really helps out.

13:23 20 There is a much, much greater demand  
21 than what we're able to meet. Frankly, to the point  
22 that we get mad at the (inaudible) sometimes because  
23 more people will show up and request and be eligible  
24 than what we'll be able to supply for that county.

13:23 25 So I don't know whether it would be

1 better with the map situation, co-pay situation, what  
2 would expand the program, but I'd certainly be  
3 supportive of anything that did extend the program.

4                   Next I would say that it would be good  
13:24 5 if you make some admin money available to  
6 organizations that's actually doing the program.  
7 Presently we screen and monitor farmers. We certify  
8 the participants' eligibility. We print and  
9 distribute a coupon booklet. We redeem those  
13:24 10 coupons.

11                   We monitor the usage and we document  
12 and report on the program -- not -- I give that list  
13 just to say that it's an admin (inaudible) program.  
14 We may try to close it, we have to, because we know  
13:24 15 when the people use their coupons and when they  
16 don't. And actually we call them and encourage their  
17 use.

18                   We've extended a hundred percent of the  
19 monies, federal monies, the last two years than we  
13:25 20 intended to spend, a hundred percent of those monies  
21 this go round.

22                   One suggestion maybe to look into would  
23 be if there is some sort of negotiable instrument that  
24 is nationwide to be developed where banks would honor  
13:25 25 the map and cut out a lot of our admin activities and

1 expenses because these coupon books with the  
2 individual unique numbers for tracking is a very  
3 expensive program. But it's a wonderful, wonderful  
4 program. We're supportive of it.

13:25 5 The top priority of it, just to see if  
6 we authorize and see -- I appreciate the opportunity  
7 to speak to you.

8 MS. NEWPORT: Good afternoon. We just  
9 saw each other last week. My name is Melinda  
13:26 10 Newport. I'm director of nutrition services of the  
11 Chickasaw Nation. And on behalf of the elders of the  
12 Chickasaw Nation I bring greetings. And thank you  
13 Under Secretary Bost and Ms. Coler, Mr. Ludwig, and  
14 Ms. Phillips for the invitation to provide comments on  
13:26 15 the upcoming farm bill.

16 The Chickasaw Nation has been  
17 privileged to administer a number of nutrition  
18 programs in the community for 19 years including  
19 through (inaudible).

13:26 20 I'm speaking on behalf of the 10,000  
21 funded individuals and 95 farmers currently in the  
22 food foundation distribution program, the Food Stamp  
23 education program, and the farmers market nutrition  
24 program.

13:26 25 I'll speak to the food distribution

1 program first. It's been a valuable resource for low  
2 income families of the Chickasaw Nation for two  
3 decades. The recent years we progressed to delivery  
4 of these benefits in a grocery style setting which  
13:27 5 allows for greater customer services and nutrition  
6 education intervention.

7 We were honored to receive (inaudible)  
8 award for the 2001 (inaudible). We feel strongly that  
9 families should be served with dignity and respect and  
13:27 10 thus continue to expand the availability of these  
11 grocery stores across our 13-county area.

12 And then (inaudible) for the FDPIR to  
13 have had an opportunity to apply for infrastructure  
14 funding for the first time, to my knowledge, in the  
13:27 15 history of the program. This onetime funding in  
16 conjunction with tribal dollars allowed us to build a  
17 new 10,000 square foot facility in (inaudible)  
18 Oklahoma which houses all the nutrition services in  
19 that area.

13:27 20 This type of onetime infrastructure  
21 grant funding is critical to bring this program  
22 forward. We hope there will be future opportunities  
23 to compete with the funds such as this to expand for  
24 those that we serve.

13:27 25 The USDA is to be commended for

1 establishing an FDPI methodology work group to  
2 determine more equitable funding. The Chickasaw  
3 Nation has met and exceeded the requirement for many  
4 years (inaudible) low number of dollars per  
13:28 5 participants compared to programs of similar case load  
6 in other regions.

7 The southwest region, overall, serves  
8 the largest number of FDR participants in the country  
9 but it's the third largest regional allocation of  
13:28 10 funds.

11 This work group will invest many hours  
12 of thoughtful deliberation to arrive at recommended  
13 funding methodology. And I urge the Department to  
14 follow through with implementation of a  
13:28 15 participant-driven solution that will insure an  
16 equitable grant to all.

17 The FDPIR grants itself several  
18 provisions that exist in some of our sister programs  
19 such as the opportunity for a small carry-forward in  
13:28 20 funding from one community to the other, or  
21 multi-funding awards. Either of these would allow  
22 programs to spend more judiciously while also serving  
23 (inaudible) in more (inaudible) and quick purchases.

24 With regard to the Food Stamp Nutrition  
13:29 25 Education Program, Chickasaw Nation now begins its

1 third year of administering this program. (Inaudible)  
2 have been extremely popular for food stamps. We send  
3 positive nutrition messages.

4 Our foremost request with regard to the  
13:29 5 Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program dollars would  
6 be that we could compete for these grants through the  
7 federal partnership that exists with all of our other  
8 nutrition programs.

9 We enjoy an excellent working  
13:29 10 relationship with our colleagues and USDA Southwest  
11 Regional Office, and would like to see the privilege  
12 expanded to the tribes of the administration of the  
13 Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program.

14 Apparently the current Food Stamp Act  
13:29 15 only allows for contractual geographic states. While  
16 we're most able to coordinate our efforts with the  
17 state initiative, we find the contracting process to  
18 be rather cumbersome. Precious time is lost before we  
19 (inaudible) to give approval and decision.

13:30 20 Additional streamlining benefit for  
21 Food Stamp would be gained by allowing approval of  
22 multi -- many initiatives cross over fiscal years to  
23 achieve final completion. As it now stands, a number  
24 of our largest initiatives have been set aside  
13:30 25 entirely due to delays in the approval process and the

1 fine line left in the (inaudible) to actually  
2 accomplish the program.

3                   The years reporting system is a step in  
4 the right direction to add consistency to programs  
13:30 5 across the nation. However, those programs that are  
6 not associated with the cooperative extension do not  
7 have access to software that will capture both  
8 participants and outcome data. A user friendly and  
9 adaptable software program that can be used to a  
13:30 10 grantee level.

11                   Additional needs in the area of  
12 recording Food Stamp data include added support to  
13 structure outcome reporting both financial and  
14 technical, and funding to cash cost benefit data for  
13:30 15 Food Stamp (inaudible) activities.

16                   With regard to Senior Farmers Market  
17 Program, we've enjoyed this program since its  
18 inception. We commend the provision for this  
19 administrative funding offered in the proposed rule,  
13:31 20 and hope that that will be realized in the final  
21 rule.

22                   The Chickasaw Nation Standard Farmers  
23 Market Nutrition Program has brought a considerable  
24 infusion of potential funding to growers in the area,  
13:31 25 over one-half million dollars since its inception.

1 Approximately 1600 seniors have benefited from  
2 participating in the program each year.

3 While organized farmers markets are few  
4 in the (inaudible) the ability to include roadside  
13:31 5 stands has allowed us to insure accessability.  
6 Retention of this option to use roadside stands is  
7 critical to the program's success.

8 The pilot for this program has yielded  
9 very creative and energetic means of implementation  
13:31 10 across the country which I believe my colleague before  
11 me mentioned. We encouraged a continued allowance for  
12 this program as it matures.

13 We recommend some flexibility in  
14 determining the benefit level, having given each  
13:32 15 senior a hundred dollars in fruits and vegetables  
16 since the inception of our program. We hope to be  
17 able to continue this much needed benefit. The  
18 seniors appreciate it and utilize the benefits as  
19 evidenced by the utilization of the -- of over 80  
13:32 20 percent.

21 We very much appreciate the USDA and  
22 its staff for all the help to the Chickasaw Nation and  
23 the country. The support of the USDA in the programs  
24 that we provide is essential. Is it our progress, and  
13:32 25 we can rely on that support and help.

1                   We, and our citizens who benefit,  
2 appreciate all that has been done and is being done to  
3 hold the (inaudible). Our thanks also goes to the  
4 members of this committee for the conscientious  
13:32 5 determination to help those in need.

6                   I've also been told that I could share  
7 a letter from the (inaudible) farmer's market  
8 participants.

9                   Dear Chickasaw Nation, Farmers Market  
13:32 10 Nutrition Program, I would like to thank you for such  
11 a wonderful program and thank you for letting my  
12 parents, Bill and Frances (inaudible) be involved in  
13 receiving coupons.

14                   My parents only live on social  
13:33 15 security, and without this program it will be a real  
16 struggle for them. My father had two massive heart  
17 attacks last June and July and on a low salt, low fat  
18 diet. Without the farmers market I don't know what my  
19 father would be eating. He ate fruits and vegetables  
13:33 20 all spring and summer.

21                   Also this is a social outlet for my  
22 parents. And don't get out much as my father's  
23 driving has been limited and my mother doesn't drive  
24 at all. They look forward to Wednesday and Saturday  
13:33 25 so they can go to the market and buy their food and

1 also to see friends and to be around other people.

2 My father enjoys talking to the farmers  
3 and is always sad when one doesn't show up,  
4 particularly the tomato man.

13:33 5 I hope you get the funding to continue  
6 this program because I think it's very vital that the  
7 senior citizens can eat well and help maintain  
8 (inaudible). Also I hope to keep my parents  
9 (inaudible) through. I also hope Bill and Francis  
13:33 10 (inaudible) on tomatoes, peaches, and watermelon, my  
11 mother loves the squash and in the fall acorn squash  
12 and beans.

13 Thank you again for this wonderful  
14 program and for helping my parents. Please pass the  
13:34 15 word on everyone is doing a great job. And I know  
16 that's what we're all in business for. It's very fun  
17 to hear that.

18 This letter is from a farmer in  
19 (inaudible) farmers market nutrition program.

13:34 20 It's a rare privilege that I have the  
21 opportunity to say thank you to tribal as well as  
22 federal officials that govern the wonderful Farmers  
23 Market Nutrition Program. I've participated in  
24 voucher program for a few years and have even each of  
13:34 25 these years.

1                   From a profit standpoint the financial  
2     impact was a major factor in my family's decision to  
3     build our own farmers market. We have been well  
4     received in the community and have a regular customer  
13:34 5     base.

6                   Because we're located right off a major  
7     roadway we meet customers from all over the country,  
8     stop, visit to purchase fresh vegetables. Using  
9     farmers market vouchers the (inaudible) elders have an  
13:34 10    opportunity to have a variety of fresh vegetables.

11                  The cost of vegetables in the local  
12    grocery stores causes many elders to forego fresh  
13    produce due to high costs. At our market Duran  
14    (phonetic) Marketplace, we have a variety of different  
13:35 15    produce, and if our people had not tried or are  
16    unfamiliar with the vegetable we give them enough to  
17    cook and provide them with recipes.

18                  In the (inaudible) Indian territory in  
19    the 1830s, among the first to (inaudible) was to step  
13:35 20    out growing food. There are a few of us American  
21    Indian women that are interested in your program as  
22    (inaudible) in worthwhile to do so.

23                  All participants in the Farmers Market  
24    Nutrition Program thank you and appreciate the chance  
13:35 25    to obtain fresh produce. This not only provides the

1 nutrition to enjoy the taste of fresh vegetables all  
2 year round, but also let's us see that someone has  
3 taken their place in the garden.

4 I hope your decisions can be favorable  
13:35 5 and that they be strong in the Farmers Market Program  
6 not only to me and my family but those that depend  
7 heavily on it. Sincerely, Birdie Williams and  
8 (inaudible). Thank you very much.

9 MS. RAYON: Good afternoon. My name is  
13:36 10 Lindy Rayon. I work with the Food Distribution  
11 Program on Indian reservations. I'm with the Muscogee  
12 Creek Nation in (inaudible) Oklahoma. I've been with  
13 the program for almost 25 years, and it's a good  
14 program, and this is the first opportunity I've had to  
13:36 15 come before something like this, and I really  
16 appreciate it.

17 I'd like to share some of our food  
18 (inaudible) programs with you. We had a number of  
19 children on our program what seems like for many  
13:36 20 years. And one time she came in to pick up her food,  
21 it was her last certification period, and we asked her  
22 if she'd like to have an application to reapply for  
23 the following month.

24 She said, no, I've raised my kids on  
13:36 25 (inaudible), but I finished school and I have a good

1 job and I want to thank you for all your help. And I  
2 wanted to share that with you because it always feels  
3 good when you get a thank you for what you're doing.

4 That was just one of the stories that  
13:37 5 we -- we hear every day. And I wanted to share that  
6 with you.

7 We see many new faces still yet on our  
8 program so we know that we haven't reached everyone  
9 out there. For some reason there's always a new face  
13:37 10 coming in. Sometimes we only see them maybe one  
11 time. Others we get to know, get to know them by  
12 their first name. But no matter what their situation  
13 is we're always glad to be there to help them out.

14 We have a diverse population with many  
13:37 15 commonalities. But the elderly are our main focus.  
16 They are one of the reasons that we continue with our  
17 tailgate sites.

18 At a tailgate distribution site for  
19 many of the elderly it's a morning outing. They come,  
13:38 20 they visit with their friends who they may not have  
21 seen since the previous month. If they're available  
22 they see a community health representative or a  
23 visiting nurse. Sometimes they are able to get a hot  
24 lunch before they return home with the commodities.

13:38 25 Like some others in the southwest

1 region we also distribute in the self-service grocery  
2 typesetting. And one of the main focuses of  
3 improvement in this area that we'd like to see is to  
4 be able to provide scanning of the food items at  
13:38 5 checkout.

6 At our tailgate distribution sites and  
7 at the store setting the program has person-to-person  
8 contact with the participants every moment. This  
9 allows an ideal opportunity to provide nutrition  
13:38 10 education, health screens, and referrals to other  
11 services.

12 Fortunately some of the (inaudible)  
13 programs are limited in the personnel and training  
14 needed to provide these services and they must rely on  
13:39 15 others. This having to rely on programs out of FNS  
16 we're limited by their schedules, their priorities.  
17 It's not something that we'd like to do but we will  
18 take what we can get.

19 I recently attended a national  
13:39 20 nutrition conference, and that was very informative.  
21 However, the information provided on food distribution  
22 on Indian reservations and commodities in general was  
23 limited.

24 Some of the areas that I'd like to see  
13:39 25 improvements made are in-depth information provided in

1 all areas of USDA FNS programs. The funding for  
2 different programs tell us we can provide the  
3 personnel and training to effectively operate it.

4 I'd like to see more focus on education  
13:40 5 and in areas such as diet. With so many diet-related  
6 health risks, education is violation.

7 I want to thank you for this  
8 opportunity again and letting me tell you a little bit  
9 about our program and the other food programs in the  
13:40 10 southwest region.

11 MR. MURANO: Mr. Secretary, Kate,  
12 Jessica, Esther, Bill, whoever you are (inaudible) and  
13 the brand-new department nutrition agricultural at  
14 Texas A & M University. I'm also the director of  
13:40 15 (inaudible) for the research center that will be  
16 launched soon on campus at College Station.

17 It's truly a pleasure to see my former  
18 colleagues again and have a few minutes to speak to  
19 you about important programs that you represent in  
13:40 20 2007 Farm Bill.

21 Mr. Secretary, the Vice Chancellor and  
22 Dean sends their greeting and regrets since she could  
23 not be here in person.

24 We want to recognize, of course, the  
13:41 25 critical importance of these programs, the invaluable

1 services they provide to the citizens of providing  
2 nutrition safety net as well as nutrition education,  
3 as we know, (inaudible) of participants.

4 I know and appreciate firsthand the  
13:41 5 great work done by the leadership and staff of the  
6 federal, state, and local program administrators, the  
7 operators, and corps to make these programs a success,  
8 and the key asset to enhanced public health and  
9 nutrition.

13:41 10 First the perspective of CSFB. This  
11 program has really focused on, as you know, older  
12 Americans. Closer to 90 percent of the current  
13 participant case load is now seniors. We cannot let  
14 the needs of this population be underserved or  
13:41 15 forgotten.

16 This program has a history of facing a  
17 challenge in appropriations to support the step-wise  
18 expansion of CSFB to the appropriations process.

19 We support improvements to the packages  
13:42 20 in this program based on the findings of the CSFB food  
21 package review to include whole grain foods, to  
22 include calcium fortified foods to fight off  
23 osteoporosis, and easy to consume beverages that offer  
24 that calcium protein fiber.

13:42 25 For both -- this same program and the

1 FDPIR develop culturally sensitive nutrition education  
2 to enhance the likelihood of its success, were to  
3 eliminate the disparity in the DIR nutrition funds  
4 which are nonappropriated, and Aetna Food Stamp  
13:42 5 program by Ethridge (inaudible).

6 (Inaudible) DIR engage in or work with  
7 (inaudible) the health service where possible to  
8 appropriate interagency agreements, continue to  
9 provide culturally acceptable and nutritional --  
13:43 10 nutritious commodities, and work to remove the stigma  
11 of (inaudible) to the USDA commodities. (Inaudible)  
12 to the FDPI food package due to its nutritional value  
13 and storage.

14 Regarding the Senior Farmers Market  
13:43 15 Program, although Texas is not funded we applied the  
16 establishment of the program through the recent  
17 proposed rule. This program has the ability to  
18 provide a boost in consumption in fruits and  
19 vegetables with this population. We encourage and  
13:43 20 support the fair and consistent application criteria  
21 to award incentives, and also supplies to the program  
22 benefit received by each recipient recognizing that in  
23 one size fits all does not apply.

24 On a related note we would love to see  
13:43 25 the free food and vegetable program expanded to

1 include the State of Texas. Lastly we --

2 MR. BOST: It is it's done. It's  
3 happened. (Inaudible).

4 (Applause.)

13:44 5 MR. MURANO: That's called a setup,  
6 folks.

7 Lastly, wonderful, we support and  
8 encourage the need to update program benefit  
9 structures and standards based on the recently  
13:44 10 completed dietary guidelines with (inaudible) become  
11 integrated into all of our program benefits.

12 For example, in light of 2005  
13 (inaudible) guidelines for Americans we'd like to help  
14 FNS create a healthier school nutrition environment to  
13:44 15 increase school consumption of whole grains in  
16 national school lunch programs and other programs.

17 With respect to all programs we  
18 encourage FNS to encourage and implement a  
19 comprehensive nutrition program that is fully  
13:44 20 integrated into all the FNS programs and is crafted  
21 with nutrition help messages that truly motivate  
22 retired individuals to make healthy nutrition and  
23 lifestyle choices throughout a life cycle.

24 In closing, I have only comments on a  
13:45 25 few of the many food and nutrition programs that USDA

1 administers and operates.

2                   The Texas A & M University agricultural  
3 leadership team shares their vision for importance of  
4 identifying and promoting healthy lifestyle

13:45 5 behaviors. Our mission as a land-granted university  
6 encompasses three parts, extension, teaching and  
7 research. And we believe firmly in our mission.

8                   This structure is a three-way approach,  
9 puts us in touch with the end user, the consumer, in a  
13:45 10 vital way, and we truly have a finger on the pulse of  
11 the people's needs on important research problems.

12                   Teaching prepares the leaders of  
13 tomorrow. Research is in areas that are relevant to  
14 solve today's problems and address key issues like  
13:46 15 child obesity. And extension, that provides outreach  
16 to everyone in the corners in the State of Texas.

17                   We can help you with nutrition and  
18 education and outreach and to our research centers  
19 with 13 locations across the state and in College  
13:46 20 Station we can help you answer questions. We can help  
21 you evaluate programs and policy decision and we look  
22 forward to future partnership opportunities.

23                   The fact that USDA hosts an event such  
24 as this is so very commendable. And I know that  
13:46 25 comments by all the folks who have made the effort to

1 be here today will be carefully considered by you as  
2 you work to make improvements to the programs and  
3 accomplish the process. Thank you for the  
4 opportunity.

13:46 5 MS. CARTER: Good afternoon. My name  
6 is Judy Carter. And I wear a couple of hats. I'm  
7 speaking today as the chair of the board of directors  
8 of America's Second Harvest, the nation's food bank  
9 network. But I'm also the executive director of the  
13:47 10 Capital Area Food Bank of Texas. And I mention the  
11 latter only to assure you that I know a lot about the  
12 various commodities programs.

13 First of all, I want to reply to Under  
14 Secretary Bost for his kind words about America's  
13:47 15 Second Harvest and our number of food banks.

16 I want to thank the whole Department of  
17 Agricultural for the close-working relationship and  
18 mutual assistance between USDA and America's Second  
19 Harvest for the last five years, and especially during  
13:47 20 the recent hurricanes.

21 Of all the federal agencies working in  
22 the aftermath of the disaster, USDA's Food Nutrition  
23 Service was far above the best.

24 The work of Bill Ludwig in the Gulf  
13:47 25 Coast, and the decision made by Under Secretary Bost

1 led to the immediate issuance of disaster Food Stamps  
2 and 400 truckloads USDA commodities being sent into  
3 the disaster zone. So that's just an incredible job.

4                   Additionally, I cannot express the  
13:48 5 depth of our gratitude to area (inaudible) efforts to  
6 keep increasing federal funding on nutrition  
7 programs. More than \$10 billion in new program  
8 spending has occurred because of your leadership.

9                   But something is fundamentally wrong  
13:48 10 with people still living in the midst of the most  
11 productive farmland in the world still do not have  
12 enough to eat. It should be a basic human right for  
13 all people to be able to purchase the food they need.  
14 Moving toward that reality is a realistic, affordable,  
13:48 15 and morally compelling goal for the United States.

16                   Just as national defense is a federal  
17 responsibility, so too should be the assurance of  
18 adequate food for Americans. For that reason we urge  
19 you to use everything in your power to make the  
13:48 20 following things happen:

21                   Monthly Food Stamp benefits should be  
22 based on a realistic measures of what poor households  
23 need to buy food for an adequate diet. The benefit  
24 formula should be revised to allow families to set  
13:49 25 aside more of their income for rent, utilities, child

1 care, and health costs.

2 Benefits must keep place with  
3 inflation. And low income families should be allowed  
4 to receive Food Stamp without forfeiting the  
13:49 5 opportunity to save.

6 Additionally, the federal government  
7 should redouble its efforts to insure that these  
8 programs reach all eligible people who wish to  
9 participate. And I know that's a goal of yours also.

13:49 10 This includes providing incentives to  
11 assure that every locality offers the full range of  
12 good assistance program. Assisting the outreach  
13 efforts of food banks and other nonprofits, state  
14 government and communities, and holding program  
13:49 15 operators accountable for meeting participation  
16 targets.

17 The 2002 Farm Bill included a number of  
18 positive reforms to the Food Stamp program making the  
19 program easier for states to administer and enhancing  
13:49 20 access for applicants and recipients. Program changes  
21 that add unwarranted complexity would undermine these  
22 advances.

23 It takes a collaborative effort to  
24 address under this. The foundation of America's  
13:50 25 Second Harvest (inaudible) capturing their excess

1 inventory and making it available to those in need.

2                   In spite of competitive pressure and  
3 advancement that we do manufacturing surpluses, our  
4 food donors have continued to make food available for  
13:50 5 the hungry families among us. But we know that we  
6 will soon reach the limits of that supply. TFAB  
7 (phonetic) and other commodities programming are an  
8 effective means for stabilizing, leveraging, and  
9 complementing private donations of food. And the  
13:50 10 federal government supplemented the core federal  
11 programs by supporting charitable organizations with  
12 enhancements of TEFAP and CSFP because food banks are  
13 growing at an alarming rate.

14                   The Food Banks of America Second  
13:50 15 Harvest started out as an organization to provide food  
16 in emergency situations. Instead we've become the  
17 safety net for millions of people who are unable to  
18 acquire sufficient food through their own resources.

19                   We know how to end hunger. Other  
13:51 20 advanced industrialized nations have already done so.  
21 And if we continue to work together we can create an  
22 America where all men, women, and children have enough  
23 to eat. Thank you for all you are doing.

24                   MR. BUSH: Good afternoon. Thank you,  
13:51 25 Under Secretary Bost. It's a real privilege to be

1 here. And I do want to say thank you on behalf of the  
2 food banks of the state of Texas.

3 I'm director of the East Texas Food  
4 Bank and the president of Texas Association of Food  
13:51 5 Banks. And we know it's a different impact that you  
6 and your colleagues in Washington D.C. have had on  
7 helping to insure that more Americans don't go to bed  
8 hungry. We've made great progress but there's still  
9 that -- more to be done.

13:51 10 Federal bonding to the Emergency Food  
11 Assistance Programs, EFAP, and the Commodity  
12 Supplemental Food Program, CSFP, provide some of the  
13 most nutritious products received by a number of these  
14 charities such as food banks and our many partners  
13:52 15 throughout America.

16 Programs such as TEFAP serve the public  
17 in two areas; one, high quality food, nutritious food,  
18 gets to the people that need it the most and in a very  
19 efficient manner; second, it also supports local  
13:52 20 farmers much as we've heard today.

21 Two specific requests that I would have  
22 is that we could possibly increase the funding for  
23 commodities themselves as well as increase funding for  
24 the administrative cost associated with that.

13:52 25 My food bank in east Texas we eat or

1 absorb about 50 percent of the costs that it takes us  
2 to move the millions of pounds of commodities that we  
3 distribute. And I do think it's very efficient in  
4 public and private markets.

13:52 5 The second issue I have is with the  
6 Food Stamp program in making the program easier for  
7 the states to administer and access for recipients.  
8 Program changes that add unwarranted complexities  
9 ultimately decrease the life of the folks for the  
10 programs and costs associated with money.

11 Two specific things there that I would  
12 recommend is to not to allow Food Stamp recipients to  
13 own a car, have a vehicle. The second one would be to  
14 automatically approve or enroll seniors or disabled  
13:53 15 Americans as they enroll for their social security  
16 benefits, in addition to easing the access increase  
17 the minimum of payment to \$25 per month.

18 The last thing I would mention really  
19 is that I encourage, and in Texas we've had a really  
13:53 20 successful partnership, with the TEFAP program.  
21 That's not true all across the country. So my sister  
22 food banks, I'd encourage that you look for  
23 opportunities to create and (inaudible) for ingenuity  
24 and entrepreneurial ideas so state government who work  
13:54 25 with local food banks, nonprofit organizations,

1 especially those organizations to make it known.

2 Thank you.

3 MR. BOST: We're going to go outdoors  
4 in just a second. We have a guest speaker who just  
13:54 5 flew in from Louisiana, the Commission of Agricultural  
6 Bob Odom. Mr. Odom, if you want to speak  
7 (inaudible). He has to fly back out and took a few  
8 minutes to share some thoughts with us.

9 MR. ODOM: We took the program in our  
13:54 10 community many years ago (inaudible) time to do. It  
11 was low income senior program. We first had half a  
12 million dollars in the program. And the problem was  
13 to get people certified.

14 We used different agencies or tried to  
13:55 15 use different agencies and didn't have much results.  
16 And we finally came up with a certification program  
17 that, as you know, we certified people, as you are,  
18 low income people.

19 And then -- then we started with the  
13:55 20 checks. And got back to handle the checks. And now I  
21 believe they are issued in exact form. And before  
22 they could give a check in reference to the owner of  
23 the farmers market, and this is where (inaudible)  
24 good.

13:55 25 Although the numbers have come down we

1 have gone from \$500,000 down to like (inaudible) to  
2 250,000. We had to reduce the amount that we gave out  
3 from \$20 a person to \$15 or \$14 a person.

4                   And \$15 a person I believe -- and, you  
13:56 5 know, this -- this is at 15 million where the program  
6 was designed and formed for the low income citizen  
7 program. And we basically will -- would like to see  
8 the program go back up.

9                   One of the problems that we have had in  
13:56 10 the program is that there is no money, there has never  
11 been any money in there, for the administration. Now,  
12 there's got to be some money -- it takes a lot of  
13 time, prices go along, prices -- it takes a lot of  
14 time and a lot of effort in order for us to do the  
13:56 15 program. And it is a time-consuming program with the  
16 state budgets. There are -- especially with the storm  
17 we've got over there looking at furloughs and layoffs  
18 or whatever is coming about. We've got to look at the  
19 beginning to try to find ways to come up with some  
13:56 20 administration money.

21                   Now, as I understand, there's going to  
22 be a move to the Farm Bill to increase it. And we  
23 would definitely support it. We believe it's a good  
24 program. It does -- (inaudible) just a couple of  
13:57 25 things.

1                   Number one, I have met, untold number  
2 of phone calls telling me, from the citizens, that  
3 they are now able to buy fruits and vegetables. They  
4 weren't able to buy them before the farmers market.

13:57 5                   The other thing that's good about the  
6 program, it gives the farmers an opportunity to  
7 (inaudible) income, small farmers the opportunity to  
8 have a farmers market, and the opportunity to take  
9 that (inaudible) sometimes is what makes the farmers  
13:57 10 market cash flow.

11                   If they didn't have that where they  
12 could go out and cash their money and buy fruit and  
13 vegetables, and they have to buy a local state  
14 product. That's the thing that I like about it. It's  
13:57 15 a Louisiana product. It is made for different  
16 states.

17                   You go into the farmers market and you  
18 can buy the state product and it helps that small  
19 farmer, small business guy, and also helps to them  
13:58 20 persevere to be in the marketplace.

21                   Those are the issues that I want to hit  
22 up on the program. I support the program. We've been  
23 a part of the program since day one. We believe it's  
24 a good program. And we will continue to support the  
13:58 25 program.

1                   The only thing that we would like to  
2 see in the next '07 Farm Bill is we will help support  
3 a large number of dollars going into the program.  
4 Rather than 15 million we would like to see a hundred  
13:58 5 million which would give you considerable more.

6                   This would give us an opportunity to go  
7 up, say, between 15 to \$25 per person which we think  
8 would be the right amount of dollars in order for them  
9 to buy the product with. Again, it would help the  
13:58 10 local economy by helping the local farmers and the  
11 farmers market.

12                   We have every farmers market signed up  
13 in the state of Louisiana. Every one of them is  
14 signed up to participate. And -- which is good, good  
13:58 15 for us.

16                   Now, we have the markets that are not  
17 available anymore. We hope they'll come back on  
18 line. Some of them come back on line based on the  
19 storm, but every market -- every market in the state  
13:59 20 has participated.

21                   Anybody that would have a question  
22 about it, I'd be happy to answer that. I've mentioned  
23 (inaudible). Thanks for the comment. Okay. Thank  
24 y'all very much.

13:59 25                   MS. SHAYNE: Good afternoon, everyone.

1 I'm Linda Shayne, Capital Area Food Bank here in  
2 Austin. And over the same period last year our  
3 partner agencies have seen a 25 percent increase in  
4 the number of people that they are serving.

13:59 5 Emergency food hangars are no longer  
6 just for emergencies. They are -- they are -- I'm  
7 sorry. More and more people are relying on food bank  
8 support to supply them with their supplemental needs.

9 They are constantly -- they are  
13:59 10 consistently going -- I'm sorry. They're consistently  
11 seeing more and more people at this food bank that are  
12 needing assistance with their everyday living  
13 expense.

14 They're the people that are working  
14:00 15 for -- they are the people that have jobs and they're  
16 going out there trying to do everything they can do  
17 and they're still not able to make ends meet.

18 During the hunger study done last year,  
19 a couple of months ago, actually, I was over talking  
14:00 20 to people and I met some unbelievable people. I met  
21 some -- I want to tell you a little story. This is a  
22 story about -- and it's a true story.

23 I met someone named Sonny. She's 78  
24 years old. She was on monthly distribution for our  
14:00 25 program, our fresh produce that we take out to the

1 various distributions. And she was out there visiting  
2 to get her food. And I decided to talk to her and ask  
3 her a few questions.

4 She told me that she's making \$470 a  
14:00 5 month, yet she's only able to get \$10 in Food Stamps.  
6 To me that's just unbelievable. She didn't even feel  
7 that it was necessary or would benefit her at all if  
8 she went back to do the requalification for Food  
9 Stamps.

10 I mean people are only getting a little  
11 amount of money to (inaudible) social security. They  
12 are supposed to be able to pay for their rent and  
13 utilities and their food and it's just not able to --  
14 they're just not able to make ends meet.

15 She told me some stories about how --  
16 other ways that she saves money. And to me it was  
17 just kind of irony the fact that the way she talked  
18 about how she had to conserve her money just to pay  
19 for food, cutting down on her medicines, taking half  
14:01 20 doses, things like that, things that we should not --  
21 that should not be acceptable by any means.

22 I mean people like Sonny -- like what  
23 we just to -- for everybody's survival. They don't --  
24 they don't go to pantries just because (inaudible).  
14:01 25 They're going to pantries because they actually need

1 to get food to help them survive.

2                   Our hope program tries to address this  
3 program on seniors but, you know, the fact is that  
4 people are living longer now. And the number of  
14:01 5 seniors living on limited incomes will continue to  
6 grow.

7                   We need to take care of seniors now.  
8 We need to do something now. And what I'd like to do  
9 is hopefully see that we can grow the CCFS program  
14:02 10 here in Texas, because if we don't grow it now  
11 ultimately we will see the needs of people that are  
12 growing the numbers of people.

13                   MS. HAGERT: Hello, and welcome back.  
14 It's good to see you here, and we appreciate the  
14:02 15 opportunity to be here. And I'm Celia Hagert, Center  
16 for Public Policy Priorities. And the first thing I  
17 want to say is thank you for your leadership, Under  
18 Secretary Bost, and the FNS program that came above  
19 water through storms in recent years.

14:02 20                   As we look ahead to the 2007 Farm Bill  
21 it makes sense we start with the 2002 Farm Bill which  
22 has worked. The provisions in the Farm Bill have  
23 worked to make Food Stamps more acceptable. We've  
24 seen a 65 percent increase of participation in Texas.  
14:03 25 We've gone about serving a third of the eligible



1 current labor authority and policy options which we  
2 think already appropriately balance the need for  
3 reasonable state flexibility, but also guarantee the  
4 federal benefit structure.

14:04 5 We encourage you to require states that  
6 are exploring new service model, that is the case in  
7 Texas right now, to evaluate those service models  
8 first, particularly when they decreased access to  
9 face-to-face -- one of the key challenges that we face  
14:04 10 in Texas and I know in other states, how you're going  
11 to (inaudible) how to administer and decrease in  
12 funding. We support looking for ways to do that. The  
13 program is here to minister what we feel is  
14 (inaudible).

14:04 15 In the area of specific improvements we  
16 recommend making Food Stamps more accessible to  
17 illegal immigrants and not let it (inaudible) as the  
18 current proposal in Congress. The way the rules are  
19 right now they deny many low income people, legal  
14:05 20 immigrants who are in the -- work hard just like  
21 citizens and who come upon hard times just as citizens  
22 do.

23 We would encourage you to consider  
24 either raising the resource limit or looking for  
14:05 25 exempting more resources when you're doing that, and

1 doing the (inaudible). As the administration  
2 continues to look for ways to increase access and  
3 membership in the ownership we felt like this is a  
4 critical change. Right now with the resources that is  
14:05 5 designed -- it actually acts as a business.

6 And, finally, you'll here a lot about  
7 increasing benefits. I realize that's very costly.  
8 But research does show that the Food Stamp benefit  
9 right now has gone up to maintain (inaudible)  
14:05 10 nationally diet and at the same time you have research  
11 showing how effective the Food Stamp and nutrition  
12 programs could be, and decreasing (inaudible) so we  
13 encourage you to consider across the board, even if  
14 it's small increase in benefits.

14:06 15 And, finally, although I don't have  
16 anything specific or smart to say about TEFAP and the  
17 commodities program, I did want to say that I am  
18 continually humbled by the work of my colleagues in  
19 the food bank community and I support all of their  
14:06 20 recommendations for increasing commodity funding for  
21 that program. Thank you.

22 MR. BOST: Thank you.

23 MS. BIEDIGER: Good afternoon. My name  
24 is Leslie Biediger. I am a registered dietitian with  
14:06 25 the Texas Department of State Health Services in which

1 I work as a nutrition coordinator for the nutritionist  
2 and the nutrition education program.

3 I want to say thank you very much for  
4 this opportunity to speak today. Thank you Under  
14:06 5 Secretary Bost and Under Secretary -- very much for  
6 your willingness to travel across the country and hear  
7 from all of us who are in the state, in the trenches,  
8 so to speak, with just working with the public and all  
9 the efforts and putting these USDA programs into  
14:07 10 practice.

11 The 2007 Farm Bill provides a golden  
12 opportunity to bring agricultural policy in line with  
13 the central health and nutrition recommendations that  
14 were established and classified by the 2005 dietary  
14:07 15 guidelines and the food guidance systems.

16 Strong fruit and vegetable agricultural  
17 policy, both as a growers, processors, retailers, as  
18 well as help all the consumers in this country consume  
19 a variety and more fruits and vegetables on a daily  
14:07 20 basis and year-round.

21 We have learned that diets rich in a  
22 variety of fruits and vegetables help to prevent heart  
23 disease, diabetes. I was reminded this month is  
24 national diabetes month. We need to be reducing the  
14:08 25 risk of cancer and helps us to bring down our rates of

1 obesity.

2                   USDA programs need to be reduced and  
3 updated so that they do reflect these new dietary  
4 guidelines for Americans and that they include that  
14:08 5 almost all consumers presently aren't eating the  
6 amount of fruits and vegetables recommended in  
7 their -- guidelines.

8                   We know that, and dietary guidelines  
9 report, that Americans are only eating 3.6 servings of  
14:08 10 fruits and vegetables a day, (inaudible) are nine to  
11 ten servings recommended. Kids are pretty well  
12 also -- with 45 percent of kids eating no fruits and  
13 vegetables a day and 20 percent eating one or less  
14 serving of vegetables each day, far short of the  
14:08 15 recommendations for children also.

16                   Texas is right along with our national  
17 alliance in that we have 22.5 percent of Texas adults  
18 that are consuming five servings or more a day, so  
19 fairly low in our state.

14:09 20                   And through our Texas WIC Program we  
21 are -- we are able to show in 20 -- that 80 percent of  
22 women participating in WIC did not eat five or more  
23 servings of fruit and vegetables day and only seven to  
24 nine percent of children ate the recommended serving  
14:09 25 of fruit and vegetables.

1                   And my job at the Texas Department of  
2 State Health Services, we don't work directly with any  
3 of the USDA programs, however we do partner with  
4 pretty much all of them in trying to raise these rates  
14:09 5 in fruit and vegetable consumption to the recommended  
6 level trained, to decrease the rates of obesity in  
7 this state and in this country. And we have a couple  
8 of recommendations for the 2007 Farm Bill.

9                   The first is to establish a new fruit  
14:10 10 and vegetable marketing program that enhances the  
11 competitiveness of marketing fruit and vegetables and  
12 marketing the health information that goes along with  
13 consuming fruits and vegetables to the nation.

14                   It's vital that at this time of  
14:10 15 heightened nutritional awareness that the public  
16 health community, that our government meets the  
17 public, with that message and speaking more loudly  
18 than maybe the inconsistent messages getting consumers  
19 wrong information.

14:10 20                   And this -- providing a double benefit,  
21 obviously helping our agricultural community, our  
22 retailers, to better hone their skills and our nation  
23 to consume more healthy diet.

24                   The next recommendation is to expand  
14:10 25 the USDA school fruit and vegetable program to every

1 state and to 100 schools in each state. Thank you,  
2 big, big, thank you from the state of Texas for  
3 these -- last Thursday the -- Texas is named to one of  
4 the six new states to the fruit and vegetable  
14:11 5 program. I think much more to come. I think we  
6 are -- many of us in this room are very excited about  
7 that.

8                   The next the recommendation is to  
9 develop more effective efforts through the Food Stamp  
14:11 10 nutrition education program and through the direct  
11 benefits of Food Stamps encouraging increased  
12 consumption of fruits and vegetables and high nutrient  
13 food.

14                   Many recommendations have been  
14:11 15 pronounced to do that. A recommendation -- another  
16 one is to consider building -- instead of programs for  
17 fruits and vegetables and other new transit foods such  
18 as whole grain and low protein -- low fat, protein  
19 items in the Food Stamp package.

14:12 20                   The next recommendation is to provide  
21 increased funding for effective and efficient fruit  
22 and vegetable commodity purchases. And, lastly, to  
23 revise the -- and update the nutrition research agenda  
24 to focus more broadly on rather than only the nutrient  
14:12 25 concentration of food, but also to include the health

1 impact of those nutrients and healthy (inaudible) in  
2 choosing (inaudible). Other than that, thank you very  
3 much again for hearing my comments as well as my state  
4 comments today. And y'all --

14:12 5 MR. BOST: What is it you're doing to  
6 effective (inaudible) vegetable consumption in Texas?  
7 And I'm not talking about the (inaudible).

8 MS. BIEDIGER: Well, currently in Texas  
9 we have two intervention communities. One is in Fort  
14:13 10 Stockton, our rural intervention, one is in Corpus  
11 Christi. And in that we're working with community  
12 recreation centers to offer summer programs in which  
13 children come with a score card, they get incentives  
14 for meeting certain (inaudible) points throughout the  
14:13 15 summer showing that they're increasing their  
16 consumption as well as their activity levels, working  
17 with coordinated health school curriculums to really  
18 promote nutrition and fruit and vegetable consumption  
19 in the school.

14:13 20 We have a partnership here in Texas  
21 called the Texas Fruit and Vegetable Network. Many of  
22 the partners of that network are sitting here in this  
23 room. And with that --

24 MR. BOST: Is (inaudible) part of that,  
14:13 25 too?

1 MS. BIEDIGER: And with that  
2 partnership we're bringing our (inaudible) partner  
3 together with our public health and research partners  
4 and combine the resources that we all have knowing  
14:13 5 that limited resources is kind of a common theme, and  
6 trying to make sure that we're better reaching our  
7 population with nutrition messages and getting tools  
8 into the hand of our local partners.

9 Other than that, promoting nutrition  
14:14 10 month, five-a-day month.

11 MR. BOST: Thank you.

12 MS. McNEIL: Thanks for this privilege  
13 to be here. My name is Shalene McNeil. I'm a  
14 registered dietitian living in a small rural community  
14:14 15 outside San Antonio, Texas, named Pleasanton, Texas.

16 My expertise is in the area of  
17 community nutrition. I'm president of the dietetic  
18 association, and am providing these comments today on  
19 behalf of the American Dietetic Association.

14:14 20 The issue I think the public needs an  
21 uncompromising commitment from their government to not  
22 only advance nutrition knowledge but also to provide  
23 resources for people to apply that knowledge to  
24 improve their personal health.

14:15 25 Millions of Americans benefit from the

1 USDA who exist in this program, yet we still have  
2 hunger issue in the (inaudible), and that's been  
3 highlighted today for sure.

4                   Coexisting with this hunger is the  
14:15 5 epidemic of obesity and overweight. In fact, it's the  
6 largest manifestation of malnutrition (inaudible). We  
7 also have (inaudible) people that are overfed and  
8 undernourished. Many people, even more of us, may be  
9 shortchanging us on nutrition even as we try to  
14:15 10 maintain healthy diets. (Inaudible) to address four  
11 key areas.

12                   Number one, USDA's new assistance  
13 program must be available that we needed a quality  
14 funded (inaudible). There's no question about that.  
14:15 15 Improving nutritional status of Americans seems to  
16 rise in priority through (inaudible) program other  
17 programs is truly for all Americans.

18                   The third point is that increase in  
19 investment in nutrition education and nutrition  
14:16 20 research is necessary and must be sustained for that  
21 as well.

22                   And, four, (inaudible) that impacts me  
23 on a daily basis is having an up-to-date knowledge of  
24 the nutritional composition of foods is essential for  
14:16 25 all the work that we do. We're going through the

1 nutritional reader. We have to have the accurate  
2 information in the nutrition database so we can apply  
3 the right number to understand what our status is and  
4 then use that nutrition database however it  
14:16 5 (inaudible) update those databases making sure those  
6 database services like (inaudible) so we're accessing  
7 the right information.

8                   If we expect to take personal  
9 responsibility for (inaudible), we have to make sure  
14:16 10 that they have the accurate information and they're  
11 prepared to make assessments for their health.

12                   The government must invest in  
13 nutritional research and the nutrition that's  
14 necessary to give Americans the knowledge and the  
14:16 15 ability to make their own nutrition decision.

16                   These nutrition recommendations and  
17 programs for the public must be based on sound  
18 science. Only the federal government has the public  
19 mandate and resources necessary to carry out research  
14:17 20 on human nutrition needs and to develop the dietary  
21 guidelines like you've been doing with the guideline  
22 for -- to form basis for all federal nutrition  
23 programs.

24                   We're particularly interested in work  
14:17 25 that outlines the relationship of dietary help

1 patterns to -- or dietary patterns to health which we  
2 think is particularly important. Thank you so much.  
3 I appreciate the opportunity.

4 MR. COOPER: Under Secretary,  
14:17 5 (inaudible) I'm Eric Cooper with the San Antonio Food  
6 Bank. And I just want to echo the comments that were  
7 made by Judy Carter, the chairman of the board  
8 representing farmers, also the comments by Robert Bush  
9 from our Texas association in Texas City.

14:17 10 In the public policy and priority it  
11 really is great to be with you here, and this is a  
12 beautiful facility and we want to thank you so much  
13 for at least allowing ourselves to have the  
14 opportunity to give some input. I find that it's  
14:18 15 humbling to think that there's anything I could say  
16 that will be of any benefit.

17 But as I run a food bank in San Antonio  
18 last year we distributed about \$43 million in  
19 groceries to about 400 nonprofit agencies throughout  
14:18 20 south Texas.

21 In the wake of this disastrous  
22 hurricane season, with the knowledge of the USDA  
23 economic research service data, that suggested that  
24 Texas had the highest rate food insecurity at 16.4  
14:18 25 percent, and the fact that evidence -- although we've

1 had some tremendous strides in the Food Stamp program,  
2 we still don't know if it's a full participating rate  
3 in the Food Stamp program.

4                   The fact that at our warehouse we  
14:18 5 struggle to meet the orders that are required, and  
6 that it's extreme budget cuts, we're so pleased that  
7 you're the voice and doing what you're doing to  
8 support us in all that we are doing to put food on the  
9 table for those that are hungry.

14:19 10                   My discouragement is, I guess, if  
11 you're (inaudible) Food Stamp education outreach  
12 program. As we come back with those individuals that  
13 need assistance, have the same seniors that present,  
14 some of the -- through the service program, perhaps  
14:19 15 the community center, as we connect with a young  
16 senior couple that was going to get lunch and they  
17 explained to them about the Food Stamp program and  
18 better eating, they confessed that their life, which  
19 was coffee in the morning, lunch at the senior center,  
14:19 20 and coffee for dinner.

21                   Coffee was their staple. But through  
22 the hurricane program they could see benefits that  
23 allowed them to put something other than coffee on the  
24 table for dinner. So be that a success.

14:20 25                   I'll render just the following

1 suggestions in the hopes that maybe with this new Farm  
2 Bill increased participation and increased benefits to  
3 those families who would be getting them.

4 I support and fully encourage the  
14:20 5 (inaudible) of the Food Stamp program to (inaudible)  
6 that will really represent what it's about. The food  
7 stamp program should target working families.

8 We need to raise the minimum from \$10  
9 to \$50. Some recommendations are raising it to \$25.  
14:20 10 Well, I think that is just not enough.

11 We need to look to the USDA monitor  
12 approval plan other than (inaudible) food plan in  
13 setting those benefits, revise the national monthly  
14 benefit to reflect the cost of purchasing food and  
14:21 15 the -- under the new dietary guidelines, restore  
16 independent (inaudible), support discipline raising  
17 the (inaudible) reductions, also allowing these to  
18 build current restrictions so that earned income tax  
19 credits do not extend that asset long enough.

14:21 20 Also, and I humbly submit this, in that  
21 we fully appreciate the partnerships that we have, not  
22 only with you-all but a program staff here in Texas,  
23 who worked tirelessly to insure the program's  
24 success. But I believe that we should create policy  
14:21 25 and structure that rewards people rather than avoiding

1 (inaudible).

2 Thank you so much for this opportunity  
3 to contribute and have a safe and pleasant time back  
4 here in Texas.

14:22 5 MR. CROSBY: Thank you for hosting  
6 this. My name is Jon Crosby. I'm Executive Director  
7 of the Christian Farm Treehouse and Faith-based  
8 Residential Treatment Center about 80 miles north of  
9 here.

14:22 10 We have a problem that I can remember  
11 in 2004 when we became a registered state-based in the  
12 state of Texas. We lost our Food Stamp eligibility  
13 for several months. And, as we stated, I want to -- I  
14 want to encourage you-all to consider that the Farm  
14:22 15 Bill needs to include a vendor status to legal centers  
16 in the state of Texas.

17 The registration certificate issued by  
18 the State of Texas should be respected by the USDA as  
19 answering all questions about our legal status and  
14:22 20 legitimate work. And I hope that USDA will do that.

21 Also, the present law states that  
22 individuals convicted in federal state court for the  
23 possession, use, or distribution of a controlled  
24 substance, are ineligible for Food Stamps. This law  
14:23 25 looks real good on paper, but is disqualifying these

1 from Food Stamp also penalizes the institutions that  
2 try to help them.

3                    Couldn't an exception be made for those  
4 who are in treatment? It's a very sad thing to see a  
14:23 5 woman, for instance, who has been addicted to  
6 methamphetamine and who is already very -- has lost a  
7 lot of weight and she may be pregnant. And our -- our  
8 position is that she needs to eat.

9                    I don't think it serves the state or  
14:23 10 the federal government to deny a person in that  
11 situation Food Stamp support.

12                    Demand Corporation study for every one  
13 incarcerated of 15 I think that the federal government  
14 and the state government need to do everything in  
14:24 15 their power to encourage the good work that we try to  
16 do in faith-based residential treatment centers.

17                    It is the greatest role, the  
18 government, to encourage those who are trying to do  
19 good work. These registered faith-based centers in  
14:24 20 Texas I believe deserve the support. And I think  
21 we've had cases where we go to folks in a crack house  
22 somewhere getting Food Stamps, they no longer qualify,  
23 and this just does not make sense.

24                    We've got a huge drug problem in our  
14:24 25 country and we need to encourage the treatment of

1 these individuals and help our country to do so.

2                   So I want to encourage the USDA, and I  
3 know it's always USDA's problem, I think the state of  
4 Texas has a problem, to figure out a way to honor this  
14:25 5 facility managing of addicted people by honoring  
6 institutions that reach out to help them. And it  
7 takes away from our ability to feed the folks that are  
8 in treatment because they are not qualified for Food  
9 Stamps. I don't know that that serves the larger  
14:25 10 interest of our culture.

11                   Again, I appreciate the fact that we  
12 are getting some support, but I want to encourage  
13 these changes. Thank you.

14                   MR. GROSS: My name is Mike Gross. I'm  
14:25 15 the Vice President of Texas State Employees Union.  
16 Among our 12,000 members are over 3,000 of the people  
17 who work in eligibility for human services programs in  
18 Texas, including Food Stamps. And so I'd like to  
19 address some plan changes in the Food Stamp program in  
14:25 20 Texas.

21                   I'd like to say that when I came  
22 (inaudible) Monday one of the things I saw was, I  
23 think was alluded to a few minutes ago, a (inaudible)  
24 I got was from the Fort Worth Star Telegram. It said  
14:26 25 Texas leads nation in rate of households at risk for

1 hunger. The article was based on David Reese by your  
2 agency I think last Friday. It said 16 percent of  
3 Texas families now are in danger of going hungry at  
4 some point in the last three years. That was two  
14:26 5 percent over the last three-year period and makes  
6 Texas number one in that pretty shameful category.

7 That article had a number of reasons  
8 given for the -- some speculation about why there was  
9 the increase in the number of hungry families. All I  
14:26 10 can suggest is there one that wasn't mentioned, at  
11 least in the article.

12 Since 1997 the number of Texas  
13 eligibility workers, the state workers who develop  
14 ability has been reduced by 41 percent. In 1997 there  
14:27 15 were 10,000 eligibility workers in Texas with case  
16 loads of about 200 cases each. By 2004 that had  
17 fallen to about 6,000 case loads of over 400 each.

18 These worker cutbacks results from the  
19 (inaudible) delivery of services that caused many  
14:27 20 people to give up in trying to get food stamps. Now  
21 Texas is poised to make it even more difficult for  
22 people to get Food Stamps. I wouldn't be surprised if  
23 the next three-year period that this plan is  
24 implemented, our numbers getting worse.

14:27 25 Texas is unrolling a plan right now

1 that basically closes hundreds of local offices who  
2 are (inaudible) of Food Stamp services, virtually  
3 eliminates the opportunity for face-to-face interviews  
4 to apply for food stamps and converts a whole system  
14:27 5 of one policy that is operated by a private  
6 contractors.

7                   Despite the plans in the commentary,  
8 the so-called eligibility to enroll will make it more  
9 difficult for people to get food stuff in Texas. And  
14:28 10 I'd like to take -- review four of the many problems  
11 that are evident in the system.

12                   First, the system as it's currently  
13 described, increases the number of bureaucratic steps  
14 that applicants would have to successfully negotiate  
14:28 15 in order to get more food stamps.

16                   Second, it retains hundreds of  
17 thousands of hours of skilled volunteer work and in an  
18 environment where representatives of that community,  
19 including a faith-based community, they don't  
14:28 20 understand where those volunteers come from, where the  
21 agency got its assumption those people will be there  
22 to help with the system.

23                   Third, the tiers hardware/software  
24 platform, which is the core of the new system, so far  
14:28 25 that hasn't shown they can produced adequate results

1 even with a pilot case load. And every time new cases  
2 are rolled into the system there are new problems that  
3 come into it.

4 Fourth, the plan, as currently  
14:28 5 described, plans to reduce the already very adequate  
6 number of eligibility workers by 50 percent limiting  
7 some 2500 available workers. The USDA (inaudible) has  
8 raised states that the call center plans does not  
9 assure the applicants who get a timely review of the  
14:29 10 state employee as is currently required by federal  
11 regulation.

12 The job cuts recently announced by  
13 HHSC, they've been announced to the employees, made it  
14 clear that there won't be enough state employees to  
14:29 15 provide those interviews as required by federal  
16 regulations.

17 HHSC has tried to minimize the risks  
18 posed by (inaudible) plan in implementing the plans;  
19 i.e., the privatized call center of the plan is  
14:29 20 (inaudible) for a program that affect the daily lives  
21 of millions of low income Texans of Texas, to protect  
22 assets to Food Stamp -- to USDA to withhold its  
23 approval of the call centers plan and the HHSC control  
24 and to require the HHSC to move forward occasionally  
14:30 25 and with the program in Texas. Thank you.

1                   MR. BOST:  If we can, we're going to  
2 take a 15-minute break.  I'd also like to remind you  
3 if you want to speak and you have not registered,  
4 please go to the front desk and sign up and get a  
14:30 5 number.

6                   (Recess)

7                   MR. DAVIS:  I want to thank the USDA  
8 for its success and all of the nutrition programs and  
9 all the work that you're doing, and particularly  
14:45 10 Secretary Bost we appreciate you and your work.  Thank  
11 you so much for all you do.

12                   I also want to mention the work of  
13 Senator Chandress (phonetic), if I pronounced his name  
14 correctly, in the Senate.  The chair of the Senate  
14:45 15 committee has voted not to cut Food Stamp at the time  
16 and final became -- or final budget that is voted on  
17 who have also (inaudible) as well.  So we appreciate  
18 the opportunity to come have this forum.

19                   I also want to encourage, and maybe I  
14:45 20 use the word challenge you, to host this type of forum  
21 for the actual recipients of Food Stamp programs and  
22 those of the nutrition programs.

23                   MR. LUDWIG:  Anybody can come.

24                   MR. DAVIS:  Somehow I don't think the  
14:46 25 word reaches them nor did I understand that I was free

1 to. But the point is that I think they should hear  
2 from the actual recipients. You will have a greater  
3 need and appreciation for the program, especially the  
4 Food Stamp programs, and how it impacts their lives  
14:46 5 essentially when we're talking about cuts of ending  
6 the program.

7 MR. BOST: For the record you didn't  
8 state your name.

9 MR. DAVIS: I'm getting ready to. I'm  
14:46 10 Gerald Davis and I work with the Baptist General  
11 Convention of Texas. I served in separate community  
12 industries across the state. And I mean works here  
13 involve with the need of the poor and are involved in  
14 any of the these programs that are interested.

14:46 15 I wanted to thank you for the  
16 opportunity to be here .

17 My comments may seem negative, but they  
18 are intended to be critiqued and positive -- hopefully  
19 you receive them positively, and they are the result  
14:47 20 of my interview with supervisors of health and human  
21 services as well as participants of the Food Stamp  
22 program. And also my comments are direct to Food  
23 Stamp programs.

24 So, again, I applaud you for your work  
14:47 25 and the efforts and the positive things that are

1 taking place even in the food stamp program.

2                   The first is in the area of the  
3 elderly. The elderly could use more benefits. They  
4 are reluctant to apply for food stamps because there  
14:47 5 are not enough benefits for them. There's already two  
6 million Texans that are eligible for food stamps who  
7 don't apply to get them, or to get the help that they  
8 need. After all the paperwork and trouble,  
9 appointments, then there's not enough dollars to meet  
14:47 10 their needs.

11                   Many of the elderly own their own homes  
12 and have exemptions that reduce the amount of dollars  
13 that they receive from the Food Stamp program.

14                   The next comments is relating to  
14:48 15 comments of Mike Gross, the previous speaker, and echo  
16 his comments for the call centers that are scheduled  
17 to be put into place who are closing, the health and  
18 human services, these call centers, the call center  
19 idea, is a concept that takes for granted a lot of --  
14:48 20 takes for granted a lot of things that are not true.

21                   This is the role of some concerns.  
22 First one is getting the elderly their (inaudible).  
23 They would much rather have face-to-face interview.  
24 They are not accustomed and are patient with automated  
14:48 25 systems. This center will create a lot (inaudible)

1 that would rather come in -- this creates some kind of  
2 rule of those that would come in the office for  
3 assistance. Many people don't have access to the  
4 Internet or are illiterate, and even now the human  
14:49 5 technical assistance is required and the (inaudible)  
6 and being serviced over the phone.

7                   There is no call center schedule for  
8 the Dallas Metroplex area. That needs to be addressed  
9 by the state because of the population of the Dallas  
14:49 10 metroplex area community resources currently are --  
11 more community resources could be a part of the  
12 restructuring of the plan, especially in the area of  
13 ministers admitted to the faith-based ministries  
14 returned the impression that because of the  
14:49 15 privatization they will be called upon to serve the  
16 sentence but yet currently they have no idea of what  
17 the food center program is about or how they are going  
18 to be involved.

19                   But in light of all that, more of the  
14:50 20 faith-based based programs, ministries across the  
21 state, could be included and involved in the  
22 restructuring of the plan.

23                   (Inaudible) system communicating that  
24 effects to the participants of changes and provide  
14:50 25 them an avenue to address their concerns. The call

1 center is being public advertised, as I said earlier.

2 This idea that the call centers would

3 gather information from individuals, applying food

4 stamps and then they will be passed -- this

14:50 5 information will be passed on to the state employees

6 for certification. This is very impersonal and would

7 create more problems especially for the homeless

8 population. Many of the homeless, as you know, don't

9 have homes nor do they have Internet access.

14:50 10 It seems that the call center constant

11 is full speed ahead and without many of these issues

12 being addressed. So it's possible to take a step back

13 and reassess the call center concept. This would --

14 it prolongs implementing an effective program.

14:51 15 There's no (inaudible) services. Many

16 staffs currently are in a state of affairs and health

17 and human resources, many feel that they have HHSC,

18 since especially in the treating (inaudible) after

19 that.

14:51 20 The Food Stamp emergency processing of

21 evacuees failed in HHS and (inaudible)

22 administratively. And in spite of this, many

23 employees received layoff notices on October 3rd.

24 The fourth and final issue is dealing

14:51 25 with the debit card system. Overall the debit card

1 system is an improvement over the paper stamp system.  
2 There are still some loopholes in the system. Some  
3 people still are not accessing the system properly.  
4 Cards are being stolen and sold. But many stores,  
14:52 5 many stores, are suffering from the EBT system going  
6 out frequently, that's Electric Benefit System, that's  
7 going down frequently. In turn they have to check out  
8 that the system is down and they have to have a leave  
9 of absence.

14:52 10 So thank you for this opportunity.  
11 Appreciate all you're doing, and God bless you.

12 MR. HUDDLESTON: Good afternoon. My  
13 name is Gary Huddleston. I'm the director of consumer  
14 affairs with Kroger food stores. Kroger operates over  
15 2400 food stores throughout the United States, and  
16 Kroger is in 37 states, as a matter of fact, and we  
17 have 200 stores right here in the great state of  
18 Texas.

19 I wanted to thank you for being here,.  
14:52 20 Very -- justice, it's good to see you again. I want  
21 to applaud you for your leadership in the Lone Star  
22 Card who is the model for electric benefits transfer  
23 throughout the United States. So thank you for that.

24 The Lone Star Card has saved countless  
14:53 25 companies and taxpayers money and has added dignity to

1 the transaction for our customers and the  
2 participants.

3 EDT does work. However, there are two  
4 issues that I want to bring forth today that we have  
14:53 5 an issue with. One is inoperability. Inoperability,  
6 your comments earlier, Mr. Secretary, about our guests  
7 from Louisiana were able to come over and use their  
8 Louisiana benefits card in the State of Texas, and  
9 that works.

14:53 10 As other agencies look at cards, we  
11 just urge the federal government to have enter on the  
12 ability among all cards in all states.

13 Secondly is we call it One Card, one  
14 platform. Certainly with EDT we'd like to see one  
14:53 15 universal card, one platform, which saves us money in  
16 terms of equipment at the check stand as well as  
17 software.

18 Last thing I'd like to talk about an  
19 amendment that was added to the 2002 Farm Bill called  
14:54 20 the country of origin label. On the surface that  
21 seems like a great idea. And it is a great idea for  
22 us as we merchandise products in our produce in these  
23 departments. But it's been problematic.

24 Currently there's a mandatory seafood  
14:54 25 country boards and labor. And just one quick example

1 on that, if we had lobsters from Mexico, Canada, and  
2 United States, they're all in the same tank, what sign  
3 do we put on them? Or should we ban the lobster in  
4 the country of origin on their claws.

14:54 5 So just one quick example of how  
6 problematic a country of origin labeling law can be.  
7 We think it's a voluntary practice. And we in the  
8 food industry certainly support voluntary -- excuse me  
9 voluntary country of origin labeling.

14:55 10 Last thing I want to thank you for your  
11 time and thank you for your food business.

12 MR. GREENE: Good afternoon. My name  
13 is Frank Greene. I'm the president of the Houston  
14 Food Bank. And I -- with all the top dress there's  
14:55 15 one that I want to go back to and that is the  
16 commodity program, the two commodity programs, TEFAP  
17 and CSFP. And I want to talk about that in terms of  
18 perhaps reframing the way that we are trying to  
19 approach this as a budgetary item for the 2007 Farm  
14:55 20 Bill.

21 Coincidentally, are I was actually the  
22 executive director of the Moorelands Food Bank until  
23 just five weeks ago. I wasn't so good in that  
24 particular situation, as we shifted very quickly into  
14:55 25 disaster relief mode.

1                   The overall experience brought for us  
2 longer, (inaudible). There were so many logical  
3 hurdles we had to overcome, but perhaps the most  
4 frustrating of all was that as we were working with so  
14:56 5 many government officials it was so difficult to get  
6 any sort of answer, we were trying to find ways, so  
7 it's very, very critical early days to getting  
8 resources in at that time, you know, ready to eat  
9 items, (inaudible) to get in to these people out in  
14:56 10 the streets, out into the overpasses in the  
11 150-degree-plus heat, no resources, and we couldn't  
12 guess, we couldn't get answers, we couldn't get any  
13 answer. The answer was more like, oh.

14                   Our experience with FNS with the  
14:56 15 Department of Agriculture, the Louisiana State  
16 Department of Agricultural, and the federal government  
17 was a contradiction to that experience. It was  
18 basically what worked.

19                   We were -- we utilized an incredible  
14:57 20 amount of the USDA commodities in those early days.  
21 We rated the CSF program. We rated the CSF program in  
22 trucks and drivers in order to make this work. And it  
23 made a tremendous difference. And what ended up  
24 happening, if not for that particular component of  
14:57 25 this disaster relief actually working when so many

1 other components did not, the results would have been  
2 more tragic.

3                   And then I'm from Texas. And the term  
4 just before you had (inaudible) and last it says, oh,  
14:57 5 the shelters are the last resort and we need these  
6 stocked. And so in looking, that's what we do. And  
7 all of a sudden we have these different commodities.  
8 And so we called (inaudible) and, you know, once again  
9 he gave us an (inaudible) you know, yes, we can.

14:58 10                   Now, both in the case of Louisiana and  
11 Texas we actually did the question a little before you  
12 said yes, but that was okay because what people knew,  
13 what Americans really wanted to have happen here, that  
14 full compliance with the law that you will do.

14:58 15                   So we had the authorization, we ruled  
16 and stopped those (inaudible) and then of course with  
17 the hurricane headed towards Beaumont we just started  
18 shipping, shipping, and shipping.

19                   The bottom line for that is as we look  
14:58 20 at why all of those trying to store what did not work  
21 with the federal government, why did this particular  
22 program actually work out? Why is it a success  
23 story?

24                   Now, a lot of it is the leadership,  
14:58 25 people who knew what the answer would be, but also

1 look at the nature of a partnership. One of the  
2 things that the federal government has really embraced  
3 in recent years is trying to form those federal,  
4 state, private sector partnerships.

14:59 5                   This particular one works extremely  
6 well. It is very fast and very flexible where we  
7 found, for instance, in New Orleans where we found --  
8 normally work a network of agencies and, guess what,  
9 in that devastated area we had two agencies. They  
14:59 10 were all wiped out.

11                   And then we were actually -- actually  
12 through a contact with the Department of Agriculture,  
13 (inaudible) Johnson, the commissioner, and Bob Owen,  
14 gives us a lot of credit. He looked us up with the  
14:59 15 local politicians who are actually saying we actually  
16 have time getting the product in.

17                   That kind of flexibility you see was  
18 just so absent, just like every other asset of the  
19 operation. But that is partnership rolled with the  
14:59 20 network. Literally hundreds of Americans each in turn  
21 then working hundreds of charities provides an avenue  
22 for which the federal government is able to supply  
23 people in a much more confident, effective, much more  
24 (inaudible) manner than what -- than any alternative  
15:00 25 that you see without with what's going on with the



1 you to be spearheading, and our job then is to really  
2 be fighting in the background so we can (inaudible)  
3 CSFP and the TEFAP program in 2004 which -- and that's  
4 my name. Thank you.

15:01 5 MR. BOST: Did everyone who wanted to  
6 speak get an opportunity to speak? Have we covered  
7 everyone?

8 One, I'd like to thank you-all for  
9 being here and for taking your time coming out and  
10 sharing your thoughts with us. As I was saying  
11 before, what will happen is that we will take your  
12 comments and then will wrap them up and at some point  
13 in time towards the end of this year they will be  
14 available on our website so that you can see what  
15 everyone else has said around the country.

16 We have two more forums. One tomorrow  
17 in Atlanta, and we I believe either Saturday the 18th  
18 of November in South Carolina. And that will be the  
19 last one that we will have.

15:02 20 Over the course of the next several  
21 months we will look at all of the information that  
22 you've provided, all of the suggestions,  
23 recommendations, that you've made, we'll sit down and  
24 take a look at those and etch a couple of thoughts  
15:02 25 that I want to throw in the pot, and from that we will

1 look in developing our package and recommendation that  
2 we will present to Congress as we go forward in terms  
3 of reauthorizing this program.

4                   There's some things also I want to  
15:02 5 share with you in the responses and comments that you  
6 made, and some people made in terms of this -- some  
7 history in terms of where we were and where we are  
8 now, where we're going in the future.

9                   A couple of comments about the minimum  
15:02 10 benefit in the Food Stamp program in terms of raising  
11 it. With the '02 Farm Bill the recommendation I made  
12 Congress was to raise it from \$10 to a minimum of  
13 \$25. Congress did not go along with that.

14                   There was some other recommendations  
15:03 15 that we made -- that we made in terms of easier access  
16 to the program. Congress did not go along with some  
17 of those recommendations.

18                   Issues regarding EDT in terms of  
19 (inaudible) easier we made the recommendation.  
15:03 20 Congress did not do it. And I say that not  
21 necessarily pointing the finger at Congress so much as  
22 to say that everyone has a piece of all of this in  
23 terms of us working together to improve the services  
24 in making a difference in the lives we're all  
15:03 25 interested in changing and serve.

1                   So you continue to have a role. You  
2 vote on people that represent you in Washington, D.C.  
3 I will put forth a package of ideas that we have and  
4 hopefully I have heard from you about those things  
15:04 5 that you see that are important.

6                   So your job isn't done. You come and  
7 you talk to me, but this is only one he piece of it.  
8 This is the beginning of a long process that will go  
9 on for many, many, many months in terms of getting to  
15:04 10 a point where some final decisions are made.

11                   I voice that because it's real  
12 important for you to realize and to hear from me that  
13 what we're trying to -- what we are trying to  
14 accomplish in terms of making a positive difference in  
15:04 15 the lives of people in this country that need our  
16 services, I cannot do it by myself. I need you. I  
17 rely on you. I partner with you. You are very  
18 important to me. That's why we're here.

19                   The issue of -- it's a perfect example  
15:05 20 of the (inaudible) we really demonstrated how  
21 successful we were in terms of coming together,  
22 addressing issues quickly, feeding people in need. It  
23 was just like that (indicating). And it's -- it's a  
24 good example because it worked so well.

15:05 25                   There are other examples that I can

1 give you, but that's the one that's really on our mind  
2 because it just happened so recently and it's  
3 continuing to occur.

4                   And I was in Chicago almost -- recently  
15:05 5 a week or so ago to sit down and talk with the  
6 leadership about what can we learn from it, what can  
7 we change to make it even better. It's those  
8 partnerships. It's those collaborations that are real  
9 important that we want to learn from so we were able  
15:05 10 to do things better more efficiently, more  
11 effectively.

12                   All of your comments are part of that  
13 process. We will take them, we will chew on them, and  
14 some we will include and some we won't. And to be  
15:06 15 perfectly candid with you, some cost a significant  
16 amount of money that I know is not going to be  
17 available.

18                   The truth -- the true vegetable pilot  
19 in all 50 states gets -- I'm not even going to tell  
15:06 20 you. I asked the question, how much? I think it's  
21 like ten billion, \$12 billion or something. And so  
22 the thing that we've learned is a step at a time. You  
23 take a step at a time. You start at a couple of  
24 states and you add a couple of states and you add six  
15:06 25 more states. We might get there a step at a time.

1 When you come to me and say, Mr. Bost, I want ten, \$12  
2 billion, it ain't going to happen. It's just not  
3 going to happen.

4 One thing I will say to you is this,  
15:06 5 that every year -- let me back up. My mother has this  
6 expression that I'll share with you that southerners  
7 will really appreciate. It's not what you say, it's  
8 what you do.

9 This administration I believe has  
15:07 10 really demonstrated what we are about. Since I've  
11 been under secretary our budget has increased every  
12 single year. When I first became under secretary it  
13 was about 35, \$36 billion. It's over 50 billion and  
14 will probably going to \$58 billion this year.

15 I think that really speaks to our  
16 commitment to these programs in terms of what we stand  
17 for in terms of making a difference. It's what you  
18 do.

19 And so the issue for us is what are we  
15:07 20 able to do, what are we going to be doing to  
21 accomplish together in terms of making it easier for  
22 you to operate our programs and easier for people to  
23 access them.

24 I'm really pleased and happy to do  
15:08 25 that. It's so great. Jessica and I know that when we

1 landed that it's just a feeling that comes over us for  
2 folks that have lived here to be home. The feeling  
3 just came over her so great she left her coat on the  
4 plane. She's just so happy to be out here.

15:08 5 MS. JESSICA: You don't need it here.

6 MR. BOST: She forgot her coat. And  
7 what's so embarrassing, it was a new coat. She just  
8 bought it last week.

9 MS. JESSICA: You just had to tell.

15:08 10 MR. BOST: We're home folks. I just  
11 had to tell.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I wanted to say  
13 something. The summit budget reconciliation, the Food  
14 Stamp cuts, escaped without being cut. The -- how the  
15 money food stamps could be cut. What do you think of  
16 the chance of which one is coming in?

17 MR. BOST: I don't know. We are  
18 supporting the President's budget in terms of insuring  
19 that what the President asks for this in his budget is  
15:09 20 there. And so it's just a process. And we work with  
21 those things. We work for them.

22 But anyway, thank you so very much for  
23 being here. We greatly appreciate it. And I'm so  
24 happy to see many of you that I used to work with and  
15:09 25 it's always good to be back.

1                   The other one comment I would make to  
2 you also is that if you have additional comments that  
3 you would like to make, or there are other people for  
4 whatever reason cannot be here to make comments with  
15:09 5 us, you can send them to us, you know. Send them to  
6 Bill or send them to Jessica.

7                   If you send them to me I'm going to  
8 encourage them to in turn send them to Jessica. So  
9 you might as well send them to Jessica to start with,  
15:09 10 or Bill, so we would encourage people to do that,  
11 also.

12                   And interestingly enough, I know you  
13 don't believe this, and many people don't, but we look  
14 at all of them. We do look at every single one that  
15:09 15 we get. In some shape or form they all get to me at  
16 some level inevitably. How it happens is that I have  
17 Jessica come in and tell me about them but I'm too  
18 impatient to read them myself. Jessica, come talk to  
19 us, so they do that. So we do look at all of them.

15:10 20                   So, anyway, good to be back. Thank  
21 you. I really appreciate it. Have a good day.

22                   (Session ended)

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