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“Working Hunger” Epidemic Engulfs 16 Million Americans; New National Report Details Americans Employed but Food Insecure

Alaska, North Dakota, Utah, and Idaho Have Highest Percentages of Working Hungry;

Minimum Wage Hikes Decrease Hunger

Approximately 16 million American adults lived in food insecure households with at least one person employed in the years 2013 to 2015. In other words, 16 million U.S. residents worked but still struggled against hunger, according to a new report by Hunger Free America.

Said, Joel Berg, CEO of Hunger Free America, “The United States is facing an epidemic of the ‘working hungry.’ This shameful data is the latest evidence that the American dream is seriously at risk unless we change our current economic and political policies nationwide. Low wages are still the top cause of U.S. hunger and malnutrition. The good news is that increasing the federally mandated minimum wage would provide food life preservers to the millions of Americans drowning in hunger.”

Hunger Free America’s analysis of federal data also determined:

- 6.12 percent of all Americans – more than one in twenty – worked but were unable to afford sufficient food.
- About half of all working-age individuals living in U.S. food insecure households, unable to afford sufficient food, were employed.
- Approximately 35% of all Americans living in food insecure households were employed.

- The states with the highest raw number of working hungry adults were California (1.779 million), Texas (1.485 million), New York (864,000), and Florida (857,000).
- The states with the highest percentage of working hungry people out of their food insecure populations were: Alaska (71 percent), North Dakota (66 percent); Utah (64 percent); and Idaho (63 percent).
- States with minimum wages at \$9/hour or greater had less per capita working people's hunger than states with minimum wage at or below \$7.25, the level of the current federal minimum wage. In states at \$9 or above, 6.48 percent of the population were working hungry, compared to 7.01 percent in the states at \$7.25 or below.

Berg continued, "Disproving the stereotype that SNAP recipients are all in 'inner cities' or blue states, out of the top ten SNAP-utilizing states, eight voted for Trump in the general election. This proves that large numbers of Americans who rely on federal nutrition assistance live in rural, mostly white, areas. Considering that 44 million Americans – living in suburban, rural, and urban areas of every state – count on SNAP, the 'they' is really 'us.' America can only be truly great if it feeds all its own residents, which is why we hope that President-elect Trump commits to ending U.S. hunger by creating jobs, raising wages, and bolstering the federal food safety net. At a bare minimum, we hope President-elect Trump pledges to stop Speaker Paul Ryan's misguided plans to again slash food aid to vulnerable Americans in order to pay for more tax cuts for the mega-rich."

The study, "The State of the Working Hungry: Low Wages Chief Cause of Malnutrition," National Hunger Report is available on Hunger Free America's website, www.HungerFreeAmerica.org, through which anyone can also donate or volunteer, or find food if they need it. Members of the public who need food help can also call the USDA National Hunger Hotline (run by Hunger Free America), at 1-866-3-HUNGRY.

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