

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 2008

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Nutrition Help for Over 82,000 Iowans House-Passed Farm Bill Has Nutrition Improvements

IOWA CITY, Iowa (May 14, 2008) — An estimated 82,000 Iowans would benefit from two key Food Stamp improvements in the Farm Bill approved Wednesday in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The House passed the measure 318-106, more than the two-thirds majority needed to override an expected veto by President Bush. The Senate is the next stop for the legislation.

Among significant changes in Food Stamp — or Food Assistance — benefits are changes in the standard deduction used to calculate eligibility and benefits, and in the minimum benefit that primarily helps seniors and people with disabilities. The current minimum benefit of \$10 per month would rise to about \$14 next fiscal year and be adjusted for inflation afterward.

The new Farm Bill would change both the standard deduction and minimum benefit to account for inflation, and index those provisions for future inflation.

Nationwide, about 11 million people are expected to be helped by those two changes alone. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), in 2012:

- 76,000 more Iowans,* and over 10 million people nationwide, would benefit from the increase in the standard deduction.

- 7,000 more Iowans,* and about 780,000 people nationally, would benefit from the increase in the minimum benefit.

Other changes could extend benefits to other Iowans as well.

According to Iowa Department of Human Services data, over 250,000 Iowans benefit from Food Assistance, which pumps well over a quarter of a billion dollars into the Iowa economy each year.

“This legislation would address a longstanding problem of erosion of purchasing power for the poor,” said Mike Owen, assistant director of the nonpartisan Iowa Policy Project. “As food costs are rising, this would be a particularly important change for those Iowans who need food assistance.

“Keep in mind, Food Stamps are not a be-all, end-all solution for low-income families, but an important supplement to put food on the table. The benefit has typically been about \$1 per meal per person. In many cases, these are families in which parents are employed but don’t earn enough to make ends meet.”

The Iowa Policy Project (IPP) is a nonpartisan policy analysis and research organization based in Mount Vernon/Iowa City. Find IPP reports at <http://www.IowaPolicyProject.org>.

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* Please note: The standard deduction and minimum benefit figures do not equal the overall 82,000 total in the first paragraph because there is some overlap in the separate measures.