

November 2013 RESULTS U.S. Poverty Conference Call Summary

Welcome and Agenda Review – Jos Linn, Grassroots Manager, U.S. Poverty Campaigns

Welcome everyone to the November 2013 RESULTS U.S. Poverty Conference Call. As we head into the holiday season, we find that not all Americans can share in the joy of the season. Instead of planning lavish Thanksgiving meals with their families, they face empty plates at the dinner table. That's the why the work you do every month on behalf of our friends and neighbors struggling with poverty is so important. In particular, your work on protecting SNAP (the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#), formerly food stamps) has been critical in defending this vital program. In October, you did a great job at generating letters to the editor, op-eds, and editorials about the importance of SNAP and opposing deep cuts to the program in the new Farm Bill. Since October 1, you've gotten 12 letters to the editor, 5 op-eds, and 2 editorials published about SNAP and we know more are pending. Keep sending in those media pieces. Farm Bill negotiations have already begun and every action you take helps push congressional leaders in the right direction.

This month, we are taking our message straight to Congress. By calling agriculture aides for our senators and representatives urging them to tell Farm Bill negotiators to protect SNAP, we are doing our part filling plates this Thanksgiving, and the meals before and after, for all Americans. On today's call, we'll talk about how can we do that.

Let me briefly review the agenda.

- RESULTS Board Chair Scott Leckman will announce our next RESULTS Grassroots Board Member
- Director of U.S. Poverty Campaigns Meredith Dodson will provide an update on our work around SNAP, walk us through the November Action, and role play a conversation with an agriculture aide about protecting SNAP
- Guest speaker: Kate Scully from Witnesses to Hunger
- RESULTS Development Manager Jen Maurer will facilitate our shares section and gives an update on fundraising
- We'll end the call with our Roll Call and Announcements

Announcement of Grassroots Board Election Results – Scott Leckman, Chair, RESULTS/RESULTS Educational Fund Board of Directors

We thank the three candidates who ran for the open Grassroots Board seat – Frank Gilbert of RESULTS Louisville, Roger Hudson of RESULTS Anchorage, and Lydia Pendley of RESULTS Santa Fe. We are pleased to announce that **Lydia Pendley has been re-elected** to this seat. Congratulations, Lydia!

Legislative Update – Meredith Dodson, Director of U.S. Poverty Campaigns

First of all, I know there might be some new folks on our call today, and we are so thrilled to have you on the call. In case you find some of the complex policy points overwhelming, here is the bottom line: millions in this country are at risk of going to bed hungry – in fact, [1 in 5 children](#) in the U.S. were at risk of going to bed hungry – and there are proposals that would make this much worse by cutting billions from SNAP and throwing millions off the program. If you don't think that is right, tell your members of Congress – and don't feel like you need to be a policy expert – you are the expert about what priorities you think your government and society should have, and voicing that is important.

There are some background slides about SNAP in the [conference call PowerPoint presentation](#), and you can listen to a webinar I did for some new RESULTS volunteers in Baltimore this past week on our website at: www.tinyurl.com/snapbasics. We know SNAP is a critical program in efforts to fight hunger – in fact, this past

week the [U.S. Census reported](#) that SNAP lifted 5 million people out of poverty in 2012, as you can see on Slide 6. And, those who care about children and education in America know that hungry kids can't learn.

On October 30, House and Senate leaders began the formal Farm Bill Conference Committee and they are working to reach a final deal in the next few weeks. Congress makes changes to funding for SNAP in the Farm Bill every five years, and a conference committee is when the House and Senate formally meet to craft a final bill to send back to both chambers for passage and then on to the President. The Senate's proposal cuts SNAP by \$4 billion and the House-passed legislation that would cut \$40 billion from SNAP – you can see details in the PowerPoint. These discussions to cut SNAP further come on the heels of an [\\$11 billion across-the-board cut to SNAP](#) (the "ARRA cut") that went into effect on November 1. According to Feeding America, [food banks would have to double the number of meals served in 2014](#) to make up for the meals lost from the ARRA cut plus the House's proposed cuts.

We cannot let Congress do more harm to hungry individuals and families. This month we will focus on pushing our senators and representatives to weigh in with key negotiators as they work to finalize a Farm Bill – by directly communicating with key aides in Washington, and using opportunities to weigh in with members of Congress while they are home. Ultimately, we want our own members of Congress to weigh in with the key negotiators on the Farm Bill: House Agriculture Committee Chairman Frank Lucas and Ranking Member Collin Peterson / Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Debbie Stabenow and Ranking Member Thad Cochran. If your member of Congress is a part of the conference committee or has a particularly good working relationship with one of the conference committee members, it's strategic to ask them to influence the conference committee through those connections.

Ideally, your group might already have a point person for each Senate and House office that can make the call to the key Agriculture aide about the importance of SNAP and urge them to ask their bosses to tell Farm Bill conference committee members to protect SNAP. As a reminder, you can look the name of the Agriculture aide on our Elected Officials page (<http://capwiz.com/results/dbq/officials/>) – find that in the Take Action page of our website.

Whether your Congressional point person is something you figured out at the start of the year in the group planning process or need to divvy up now, we'll take a pause for a minute to help you determine who those point people are...

As you talk with the aide, make a point blank request: will they talk with the Farm Bill negotiators? And then ask when you can follow up to see what their boss said. In a moment we'll demonstrate a conversation and you can see the talking points to adapt for your calls or conversations. Other group members should bolster this message by calling or e-mail all your congressional offices and talking to the receptionist – see the PowerPoint for a sample script, which will also be in next week's US Poverty Update.

Speaking Practice: Calling an Agriculture Aide about SNAP – Meredith Dodson and Jos Linn

So, let me give you an example of what a call to a Senate Republican aide might sound like:

Volunteer: Hi, my name is Meredith Dodson and I am a constituent from Anytown. I've left you messages before when I've called on behalf of RESULTS – I am a volunteer advocate concerned about poverty in America. Can I have 5 minutes of your time to talk about SNAP and the Farm Bill?

Aide: YES, I HAVE A FEW MINUTES BEFORE A MEETING

Volunteer: As you probably know, the latest USDA data says that more than [1 in 5 children](#) in the U.S. were at risk of going to bed hungry last year. I'm a mother of two young children and I know firsthand that children who are hungry are tough to deal with – and they struggle to learn in school, suffer from weakened immune systems so they are more likely to get sick. This is why the SNAP program, formerly known as Food Stamps, is so critical – and just this past week the [U.S. Census reported](#) that SNAP lifted 5 million people out of poverty in 2012. Did you happen to see that new data?

Aide: NO, I DID NOT.

Volunteer: I'm happy to send it along

Aide: THAT WOULD BE HELPFUL.

Volunteer: I am disappointed that both the House and Senate are proposing cuts to SNAP. Actually, I was feeling outraged when the House passed a bill that would cut the program by \$40 billion over the next ten years, forcing at least 3.8 million Americans off the program and denying 210,000 children free meals at school. What's your office's position on the House legislation?

Aide: *WE DON'T HAVE A POSITION BUT I KNOW WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT FRAUD AND ABUSE IN THE SNAP PROGRAM.*

Volunteer: SNAP has one of the strictest and most rigorous quality control systems of any public benefit program. Fewer than 2 percent of SNAP benefits are issued to households that do not meet all of the program's eligibility requirements, a record-low rate. Overall, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found SNAP has an accuracy rate [above 96 percent](#) and [fraud rate of only 1.3 percent](#). SNAP achieved its lowest error rates on record in fiscal year 2011, even as caseloads were rising as more people found themselves in poverty and administrative resources to run were strained. The program is working – as I mentioned earlier, SNAP lifted 5 million people out of poverty in 2012

How familiar are you with the House bill's so-called “work provisions”?

Aide: *SOMEWHAT, BUT I HAVEN'T EXAMINED IT CLOSELY.*

Volunteer: Well, the legislation would force 1.7 million unemployed Americans off the program who live in high unemployment areas and want to work but cannot find a job or a slot in a job training program. And, what's called the Southerland amendment really doesn't make sense to me — a provision in the House bill that throws parents with children as young as one who cannot find work or are unable to find safe and affordable child care for their young children off SNAP. Do you handle child care issues for the Senator?

Aide: *NO, I DO NOT.*

Volunteer: Well, I can tell you that child care is incredibly expensive and only one out of six low-income families eligible for child care assistance are able to receive it now. And the Southerland amendment gives states the incentive to slash SNAP by giving them half the savings if they kick people off the program.

Aide: *I NEED TO LOOK INTO THAT MORE. WE'VE HEARD THE PROGRAM DOES NOT DO ENOUGH TO ENCOURAGE SNAP PARTICIPANTS TO WORK.*

Volunteer: SNAP has strict work requirements for adults without children -- they can only get SNAP for 3 months out of every 5 years unless working 20+ hours. Now Governors can ask for waivers in areas of high unemployment – the House bill takes away that important state flexibility. Currently, there are about 3 unemployed workers for every 1 job opening. What we need is not to penalize people looking for jobs – instead we need a stronger economy so that there are well-paying jobs in order to reduce SNAP participation.

Aide: *YES, BUT THE PROGRAM'S SPENDING IS OUT OF CONTROL AND WE NEED TO CUTS SPENDING TO ADDRESS THE DEFICIT.*

Volunteer: What is so effective about SNAP is that it responds to economic downturns – providing a temporary cushion during tough economic times to ensure millions of Americans, including children, seniors and veterans, haven't gone hungry during the downturn as families strive to get back on their feet. SNAP costs shrink as the economy improves and people can put food on their own table again, and the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office predicts that SNAP spending as percentage of GDP will fall to 1995 levels by 2019. Ultimately, our long-term deficits won't be solved by slashing SNAP.

Fundamentally, I believe that we cannot balance the budget on the backs of our most vulnerable. Previous bipartisan deficit-reduction packages have exempted SNAP from cuts in recognition of this critical safety net program to the millions of struggling Americans it serves. By fighting hunger, we are investing in our future economy by making sure children are healthy and not hungry at school.

So, here is my request: can you talk to your boss and ask her to weigh in directly with Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Debbie Stabenow and Ranking Member Thad Cochran, telling them to protect SNAP in any new Farm Bill or other legislation?

Aide: *WELL, WE'VE BEEN FOLLOWING THE FARM BILL AND WAITING TO SEE WHAT THEY PRODUCE. FOR A VOLUNTEER YOU SEEM TO KNOW ABOUT THIS PROGRAM. I WILL TAKE THIS BACK TO THE SENATOR.*

Volunteer: Great, when will you be able to talk to her?

Aide: WE HAVE AN ALL-STAFF POLICY MEETING ON TUESDAY AND I KNOW WE'LL DISCUSS THE FARM BILL AND THE OVERALL BUDGET SITUATION.

Volunteer: Okay. Can I schedule a time to give you a ring on Wednesday morning to follow up?

Aide: SURE, RIGHT AT 9:30 WORKS.

Volunteer: Perfect. I'll call you then. Thank you for your time and your work to follow these policy issues.

You can find this conversation on our website at:

http://www.results.org/take_action/november_2013_u.s._poverty_laser_talk/

As a reminder, this was just an example of a conversation, you probably won't hear all these objections in your conversation but I wanted to flag them all. If you have real expertise to share – especially as a former or current SNAP participant, definitely share that in your conversations.

And, don't forget to also work on getting face-to-face lobby meetings; 97 percent of Congressional staff say that in-person issue visits from Constituents influence policymakers, with 46 percent reporting it has a lot of influence – as you can see on Slide 19. So, follow up on your face-to-face meeting requests and upcoming town halls – you can use these talking points in a face-to-face meeting back home. Both the House and Senate go on recess later this month.

Guest Speaker: Kate Scully of Witnesses to Hunger

Due to unforeseen circumstances, scheduled guest speaker Angela Sutton of [Witnesses to Hunger](#) was not able to be on the RESULTS call today. We hope to have Angela speak on a future call. We greatly appreciate Kate Scully of Witnesses to Hunger stepping in to speak with us today.

Kate Scully, JD is the Policy Analyst for the Center. She works to translate the Center's research and practices into policy-relevant communications. Kate will also coordinate the Center's social media communications on Facebook and Twitter. Kate earned her JD from Widener University where she was the Research Editor of the Widener Law Review. She also has her bachelors in History from the University of Maryland Baltimore County and graduated as a Humanities Scholar.

Kate, can you tell us more about the Witnesses to Hunger program?

The program is housed at Drexel University, came out of Children's Health Watch. We are doing research, talking to families 1-on-1 about hunger, housing, and how programs help them. Our Executive Director was getting called to testify and knew the moms we interviewed were real experts.

Started with 41 women in North Philadelphia, had cameras to take pictures. Worked with women to share stories and experiences, now in Boston, Baltimore, Camden NJ, and Philly. They encourage other people to share their stories – everyone needs to speak up about hunger.

Our website has photographs and profiles: <http://www.centerforhungerfreecommunities.org/our-projects/witnesses-hunger/meet-the-real-experts>. Share your own stories too!

SNAP participants saw cuts to benefits last week – based on your work, can you talk about impact of SNAP cuts?

Even before November 1, SNAP benefits weren't lasting through month. For example, Angela saw her benefits decrease and wasn't sure why – is now appealing. Even if people were able to spread out their benefits, they weren't able to buy fruits and vegetables – focused on canned foods, others. Urge folks to watch [A Place at The Table](#) – one of the Witnesses shared that she had to keep on buying Ramen Noodles for herself and her children because her SNAP benefits didn't stretch far enough. Now with the ARRA cuts of \$36/month for family of 4 = food off the table. Worked with Witnesses and in last week have had more emergency requests.

As someone who works with these families, what do you see as the major challenges to move and stay out of poverty?

Majority of families on SNAP working but not enough to make ends meet – not making enough. Even those “playing by the rules” and working are still struggling. Several Witnesses trying to go back to school but with costs of child care and other challenges, it takes a long time. Even though going back to school may make better wages, parents aren't sure how to pay rent in the meantime.

We also hear politicians hear mean things about those in poverty – “lazy”, “don't want to work”. Have you seen impact on them?

It is degrading, untrue, mean, and malicious. Being in poverty is hard work –fighting every day for benefits, fighting landlord because mold in ceiling or rodents, etc. Offensive because we know how hard these people work. I would challenge any member of Congress to live for extended period of time and still call them lazy. Deserve our help and they deserve our respect –not calling them names.

Paul (Minneapolis): I have used food shelves in the past and can imagine the kind of balancing act that parents go on – and then to be faced with cuts. What would your response be to the fraud argument?

SNAP has one of the lowest fraud rates of most programs – and meanwhile other programs in the Farm Bill have much higher rates. In some cases, it is true that there are people not following “all the rules”, but that’s not most of the people on the program. The vast majority are trying to feed their kids and impacts them and their children’s future. Just because you are hearing the accusations doesn’t mean it is accurate – yes, there might be a surfer in California getting attention but here there are 10 moms in Philadelphia struggling to make it.

Jeff Olsen (Bernardsville): can you tell us more about your efforts in NJ?

We have 10 mothers and grandmothers in Camden NJ, just started in January this past year. Did exhibit at Campbell Soup’s corporate foundation and then at gallery. They are 10 incredible women with pictures. The Witnesses talk about whatever issues impact them – and housing is a huge issue. Took pictures of “Tent City” right off the highway – and there are people on waitlists to live in these tents!

Judy (Des Moines): how counter “I saw someone buy junk food“ or “my friend saw someone buying...”?

Many people want to buy nutritious food but cannot afford it – Ramen will fill up the belly and an apple might not. I encourage people to get to know someone on SNAP and discuss it firsthand.

Quick plug: having Philly event for 5 year anniversary on December 11 – info on our website:

http://www.eventbrite.com/event/8993972213/eorg?utm_source=Save+the+Date+5+Year+Anniversary&utm_campaign=Exhibit&utm_medium=email.

Fundraising and Grassroots Shares – Jen Maurer, Development Manager

Hi everyone, this is Jen Maurer your Development Manager. I wanted to be on this call to thank each and every one of our groups who have held fundraising events in the last 2 weeks and throughout the year. Every fundraiser engages our donors and community in a personal way — I know of many of you who first found us through a fundraising event!

It’s been a whirlwind of fundraising activity for us this last year — and especially this last month! In fact, we’ve raised well over \$100,000 in the last couple of weeks, and there are still events coming up!

These events — from a small houseparty to a huge gala — are so critical because they raise the most valuable money we receive. It sounds strange to say that one dollar might be more important than another, but it is true. Money raised by you, our grassroots partners, has no restrictions on it like grants. This means that you help RESULTS and RESULTS Educational Fund to be agile and able to respond strategically to urgent opportunities. This money also leverages grants because funders love to see what a deep and wide individual giving base we have. You also bring in monthly donors, and that stable stream of funding allow us to plan for the year.

And perhaps the other wonderful thing fundraising is that you are making people happy. Think about how it feels when you donate. It feels great! So with one event you are raising valuable funds for RESULTS, cultivating brand new volunteers, and making people feel great.

So here are some special shout-outs to groups who have gone over and above most recently:

Thank you to Houston, Austin, and Ann Arbor who held events to let their guests connect and be inspired by our founder, Sam Daley-Harris.

Thank you to Kitsap/Bremerton in Washington state who hosted Larry Reed, the executive director of the Microcredit Summit Campaign

Thank you to Columbus and New Jersey who held joint global and domestic events, so that the ir partners could share their strengths and donors could learn about all sides of our work.

And last, but never least, thank you to Inland Empire in California who bravely invited college students into a partner's home for a beer tasting.

We still have events coming up in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Olympia, WA before the end of the year, as well as groups hosting "Virtual Thanksgiving Feasts."

If you would like to host an event for this year or even in 2014, please reach out to Cindy Levin at clewin@results.org It's never too early to start planning a fundraising event!

Share : Getting Media Published

Bill Baker: Stamford, CT

I had always imagined that you had to work for the newspaper or have national name recognition to get an op-ed article published. So what a surprise to see mine in print.

At Jos's instigation on our last Free Agent's Call, I wrote a draft. Then Jos kindly agreed to read it and comment. He did some fact checking and helped made a few spots clearer. He also suggested a process of emailing the article, calling to see if it arrived, and following up in a few days, if it didn't appear in the paper. I have to say that the feeling of being so well supported helped me push the button to send it to The Stamford Advocate and Greenwich Time.

Realizing that papers would not publish something already published somewhere else, I set to work on a second version and sent it to The New Haven Register. Here Jos's method of following up showed its value. The Managing Editor had said he would read it, but he hadn't. The follow-up (with a comment that I wanted to have Congresswoman DeLauro's back) got it read, and it appeared in the paper the next day. So we have now covered the 2 largest cities in the state.

Two subsequent happenings:

Our chapter is going to meet with the Editorial Editor of the Advocate to agree on how to support each other and to agree on an M.O. (I think he recognizes a source of material when he sees it.)

Yesterday's editorial in the Advocate was on the cuts to SNAP and called on the Governor to step up to help the hungry. I think our contact helped get it into his mind.

Now I'm working on a third version for the Hartford Courant in the state capital.

Congratulations, Bill! Keep up the good work. Now let's go to Columbus, OH, where we'll hear about their recent fundraising event for RESULTS.

Share : Fundraising Success

Ginnie Vogts: Columbus, OH

We had our annual fall fund raiser in Columbus last Saturday. It was a cool cloudy day, an away football game day which is significant if you have a school like The Ohio State University in town. Our venue was perfect, an open space centrally located which we got for a mere \$50. Some of the features which made this event so wonderful were; a display of a weeks's worth of SNAP food for a family with a list of prices and nutritional value, posters with SNAP myths and facts, a display of our published LTE's, great food and wine donated by our group, an animoto which is a video composite of pictures with music that one of our members created showing local poverty statistics and RESULTS actions. We also showed the 2013 Everyday Heroes which explains RESULTS' mission and successes very well. Our speakers were a friend from the community who spoke about being a SNAP recipient very movingly and Joe Riffe, our new global group leader who spoke about why he has been called to do this work. He was outstanding and also did our ask. Several people were said to increase their donation after hearing from Joe. It was a great event overall.

Unfortunately, we had a small audience for a couple of reasons; there were several competing events in the community which targeted our typical pool of invitees, I was away for a month for family reasons, we didn't get much publicity, and there was not much energy put into inviting. This is something we will be reflecting on as we plan for the next fund raiser. Our tally so far is about \$3500 with a few outstanding promised donations. One highlight was an artist from the community who stopped in. He was moved by our cause and said he wants to work with us to put on the next fund raiser and bring in art from his fellow artists for auction. His son is a musician and he said we would need a much bigger space because he knew so many people who would

want to come. So we are not discouraged. Maybe we had this perfect little event in order to find our way into the larger community. Our group has been looking for ways to become better known and maybe we will be heading in that direction soon.

Roll Call – Meredith Dodson

Now let's do this month's Roll Call. Here are the questions we want you to answer this month:

1. **How many people are in the room?**
2. **How many contacts will group make with your congressional offices about protecting SNAP?**
This includes all the direct communications each House and Senate point person makes with aides as well as other communications your group makes to reinforce that message.

In a minute, the operator will begin calling your groups by city. When your city is called, simply answer the question like this "Our numbers are 6 and 18." Remember, the operator will unmute your phone when your city is called, so you don't need to do anything to your phone. Again, the questions are:

1. **How many people are in the room?**
2. **How many contacts will group make with your congressional offices about protecting SNAP?**
This includes all the direct communications each House and Senate point person makes with aides as well as other communications your group makes to reinforce that message.

80 people are on the call who will make 212 contacts

Closing – Meredith Dodson

Al Sheahen Rememberance

RESULTS is sad to announce that Al Sheahen, long-time group leader for the RESULTS San Fernando (CA) group died last week. Al was a long-time champion for social justice and for helping people living in poverty. He was a fierce advocate for the Basic Income Guarantee ([BIG](#)), which would ensure that everyone in America would be guaranteed a minimum income so as meet their basic needs. He even [wrote a book about BIG](#), which was re-released last year. Al was such a frequent letters to the editor contributor, the Los Angeles Daily News [dedicated a page to him last week](#) upon his death. A memorial service is being help for Al on November 10. We thank Al for his years of service to RESULTS and other important causes and we send our **condolences to his family. We will miss you, Al.**

Announcements

We continue to do outreach in many areas around the country, enlisting new volunteers in RESULTS' anti-poverty work. In 2013 we've started new groups in:

- **Creston, IA**
- **Whitefish, MT**
- **Arlington, VA**
- **Orange County, CA**, and
- Re-started our **Chicago, IL** group.

In addition, we have groups in **Boston, MA; West Los Angeles, CA, Kansas City, MO; Waterloo, IA; Albuquerque, NM;** and **Baltimore, MD** that are in new group training. Finally, we are working to start seven additional new groups in works in **Burlington VT; Portsmouth/Durham, NH; Maine, Lexington, KY; Louisville, KY; Cincinnati, OH;** and **Indianapolis, IN.**

If you know people in these or other areas of the country who would be interested in getting involved, invite them to a [RESULTS Intro Call](#) or contact Meredith Dodson at (dodson@results.org), (202) 783-7100, x.116).

RESULTS Media Training Call: This Tuesday, November 12 at 8:00 pm ET. (218) 862-1300, passcode 682494.

RESULTS Introductory Call: Wednesday, November 13, 9:00 pm ET. Register for this or another Intro Call at www.tinyurl.com/RESULTSMeetandGreet/.

RESULTS U.S. Poverty Free Agents Call: Monday, November 18 at 1:00pm ET or Tuesday, November 19, 9:00 pm ET. (267) 507-0370, passcode RESULTS (7378587, plus #).

Mark your calendars! **The 2014 RESULTS International Conference will be June 21-24, 2014 in Washington, DC.** We'll have more details in the coming weeks but we hope you'll plan to join us in DC next June.

You can find a full list of upcoming events, along with call-in numbers on the [RESULTS Events Calendar](#).

The next RESULTS U.S. Poverty National Conference Call is **Saturday, December 14, at 2:00 pm ET.** *Note the different time as this will be a joint U.S. Poverty and Global Poverty call.*

Happy Thanksgiving!