

National Meeting Summary

Welcome

Joanne Carter, RESULTS Executive Director (Washington, DC)

Find slides for this meeting at: http://www.results.org/uploads/files/2015-03_RESULTS_U_S_Poverty_National_Mtg_PPT.pdf

Welcome everyone to the RESULTS US Anti-poverty virtual gathering for March 2015. I want to give a shout out to the Texas folks who are gathered today for a workday and the Northern California folks. We're even more powerful when you all get together!

If there's one thing I want to get across, it's that your advocacy is incredibly important at this time of year.

This is when the Congressional budget process moves forward and we will see new threats to vital anti-poverty and anti-hunger programs that we know work. Your ability to engage EARLY and engage WITH DEEP KNOWLEDGE AND PASSION is so important to the whole national advocacy effort.

Just two weeks ago I was at a meeting with CEOs of national anti-hunger organizations at the National Anti-Hunger Policy conference—and I want to let you know and I am not exaggerating this—how many of those CEOs told me how important RESULTS work—your work—had been in protecting the SNAP program (formerly Food Stamps) a year and a half ago. How essential your grassroots efforts were in successfully pushing Congress to abandon deep cuts to the SNAP program.

And these CEOs are all hugely grateful that we are mobilizing again now to protect SNAP. At this CEO meeting, we spent a lot of time discussing the potential threats to SNAP (and other programs) as the budget and various other processes move forward in Congress. And how we can work together to prevent these cuts.

It's incredibly important that we keep engaging with Congress and pushing for face-to-face meetings with members of Congress—it's really fantastic work that you all have already had at least 22 face-to-face meetings, which is ahead of the pace even of last year which was a record year for us.

It was also so great to have 48 REAL Change young leaders in DC two weeks back—for training and strategizing and especially going to Congress and having over 100 meetings—making the case about why we need to protect SNAP, and protect and expand refundable tax credits for low-income families

If Congress doesn't target SNAP for cuts in some of the ways that we're worried about, it will be in part the work you are doing right now BUT also because of the work we did in 2013—we made it clear that those SNAP cuts were politically unacceptable and that work and that message carries forward.

I want to end by extending a personal invitation to each of you to the RESULTS 35th Anniversary Conference in DC July 18-21. We really want you there to share in the celebration, to strategize together for this year and the incredibly important 2016 election year, to hear from Senator Sherrod Brown at our Lobby Day kick-off, to be part of over 300 meetings on Capitol Hill. We want you and we need you.

Now I am going to turn the call over to our Director of Domestic Campaigns Meredith Dodson who is with our Texas folks in Houston, to introduce our very special guest Lindsay Koshgarian of the [National Priorities Project](#) (NPP) who bring enormous knowledge of the budget process and how we can impact it.

Guest Speaker: Lindsay Koshgarian, National Priorities Project

Bio

- Research Director at the National Priorities Project (www.nationalpriorities.org)
- NPP's mission is to make our complex federal budget transparent and accessible so people can exercise their right and responsibility to oversee and influence how their tax dollars are spent.
- Lindsay researches education and workforce spending, social insurance and entitlement, spending, debt and deficits, and tax policy.
- Previously with the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute
 - Led economic studies on workforce and education, housing markets and affordable housing, and federal and state spending initiatives.
- Bachelor's Degree in Physics from the University of Pennsylvania and a Master's Degree in Public Policy from UCLA.

Presentation *(any italicized text has been added by RESULTS staff)*

- Overview of federal budget
 - 2015 federal budget enacted last Dec and now we're already thinking about the 2016 budget
- Biggest chunk of budget is Social Security program & employment/labor
 - While we do expect to see some argument over Social Security this year (disability fund vs retirement fund), it won't be the biggest debate
- Health care, particularly Medicare and Medicaid is the 2nd biggest portion
- Defense is 3rd biggest part of the budget; still very huge
- Everything else is very small in comparison
 - Best known poverty programs are the small portions
- Difference between Mandatory and Discretionary programs
 - Discretionary programs (*e.g. Head Start, WIC, NASA, national parks*) depend on annual budget process and "appropriations" of funds
 - Funded primarily by income taxes
 - Mandatory programs (*Medicaid, SNAP, Medicare, farm subsidies etc.*) depend on eligibility rules and permanent "authorization of funds"
- Discretionary spending in 2015: \$1.11 trillion

- Congress should in theory enact 12 spending bills (rarely actually happens)
- More than half of this spending goes to the military
- Education is only 6%; mostly goes to primary and secondary programs as well as some for higher education
- Tradeoff situation: An F35 Jet fighter has never seen combat and will likely never see combat but has gone far over budget by the tune of \$7-8 billion/year.
 - For the same amount of money, we could also fund **one million Head Start slots** in a year
- Military vs non-military spending
 - Only time domestic program spending peaked above military spending was in 2009, at height of the recession.
 - Usually domestic programs doesn't ever come even close to military spending
- House and Senate will probably adhere to sequestration budget caps (*arbitrary budget cuts passed in 2011*) on paper
 - "On paper" part is a big caveat though
 - Overseas contingencies are not a part of these budget caps. Already the budget caps on military spending are very high but this separate spending makes it even higher than domestic programs
- Unfortunately the Murray-Ryan Budget plan, *which undid much of sequestration in 2014 and 2015 budgets*, expired this year so we will most likely be back to the original spending caps/cuts
 - This means sequestration comes back with blind cuts across the board
 - If there's enough gridlock, then things that no one wants to see will happen (*many legislators do not like these arbitrary budget cuts*)
- In recent decades, it is extremely rare that the federal government has surpluses (*last surplus was at the end of Clinton presidency*)
- This year we're back to basically normal deficit levels
 - A lot of deficit hawks will say we need to cut this to nothing or that we're losing solvency
 - This is not historically the case
 - 2.5 percent deficit is pretty much normal for US
- Revenue:
 - Biggest source is individual income taxes (over half)
 - 1/3 is Medicare and Social Security taxes
 - 11 percent is only corporate tax
 - We need to talk about revenue along with deficit

- Corporate tax and income tax have diverged wildly and income tax is a much bigger piece than before
- Pew Center has a survey on Americans' priorities for government
 - 76 percent of people's priorities say terrorism this category has bumped up in recent years
 - However, economy, jobs, education, and Social Security are always at the top, always constantly high on priorities.
- 70 percent of Americans were against SNAP cuts last year.
- We need to ask ourselves and Congress: which of the budgets currently proposed matches Americans' priorities best?
 - If you go to the NPP website (<http://www.nationalpriorities.org/>), can find the [state smart site](#) showing federal funding, federal aid to individuals, federal compensation for federal employees, federal contracts for each state
 - Gauges what programs are the most important in your state
- [Tradeoff tool](#): trading one program for another: what could you get if you shifted funds?
 - Can also do this for your own state or local county
- [Tax receipt tool](#): (2014 tax year this Tuesday, March 17)
 - Of the average taxes, how much goes to each program? Talks about specific programs (i.e. Military, SNAP, Medicaid, etc)
- Administration for Social Security spending comes from discretionary spending
 - Small portion

U.S. Poverty Campaigns Legislative Update

Meredith Dodson, Director of U.S. Poverty Campaigns (calling from Houston, TX)

Reminder for our upcoming conversation: poverty and hunger still a very real problem for millions of Americans.

- Anti-poverty programs DO make a difference (Supplemental Poverty Measure), but we need to do more
- We can and should do better

SNAP basics:

- Primary defense against hunger in the U.S
- 2/3 of SNAP recipients are children/elderly/disabled

Government anti-hunger programs make a difference and are key

- Only 1 in 20 bags of food assistance comes from charitable donations; federal nutrition programs pay for the rest ([Bread for the World](#))

Budget process:

- GOP budgets: want balance budget in 10 years with no new revenues, no significant savings in SS or Medicare, and increase defense spending
 - This means you have nowhere else to go other than non-defense discretionary and low-income entitlement programs like SNAP and Medicaid
 - Still waiting for the 2016 GOP budget resolution but in 2014, the House GOP Budget (“Ryan Plan”) got [69% of its cuts](#) from programs for people with low or moderate incomes (slide)

Budget Timing:

- March 18-19 House and Senate Budget Committees consider their 2016 budget resolutions (called “markups”)
 - Week of March 23: House and Senator floor deliberation of budget resolutions
 - Senate will do a “vote-a-rama” on amendments to the plan (string of quick votes one after the other)
 - March 28-April 12: House and Senate recess
 - Mid-April- Congress will try to pass a final budget resolution
 - Summer/Fall: House/Senate will try to pass reconciliation package
- Decision on King vs Burwell (U.S. Supreme Court case on legality of subsidies in Obamacare) will be released on June 30th so reconciliation will likely not occur until after that
- In addition, Congress could also once again cut SNAP funding as a way to pay for Child Nutrition Reauthorization, as it did in 2010.
 - Some in Congress are discussing broader “safety net reform”, which could include dangerous structural changes to SNAP, Medicaid, and other programs (i.e. making them block grants to states).

But there’s good news...

- Hearing rumors there will not be any Agriculture reconciliation instructions but if they do, Budget Committee recommends it but it is not binding.
- Why the shift?
 - Big pushback when House passed \$40 billion in SNAP cuts 1.5 years ago – you helped make that happen (story re: House GOP in meeting last week) . Reminder of the longer term impact of your work!
 - The outreach you’ve been doing in past few weeks, especially 100 REAL Change lobby meetings, has also helped
- BUT: disturbing report out Friday via Wall Street Journal saying that Congress may be looking to convert SNAP and Medicaid into block grants to the states, which would be terrible policy: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/senate-republicans-budget-targets-medicaid-food-stamps-1426201369>
- Gotta keep up the pressure!

TAKE ACTION: Use the [RESULTS Action Sheet](#) to send letters to Congress, urging them to protect SNAP in budget negotiations: <http://tinyurl.com/protectSNAP>. Or, [send an email](#) through our online action center: <http://tinyurl.com/onlineSNAP>.

Also, remember that **Congress will be on recess the first two weeks of April.**

- Request face-to-face meetings and attend town halls to talk about our issues (http://capwiz.com/results/issues/alert/?alertid=7268106&MC_plugin=2201)
- Contact Meredith Dodson for a lobby prep call before your meeting or town hall (dodson@results.org)
- Take copies of our [EITC/CTC](#) and [SNAP](#) Lobby Request Sheets
- After your meeting, tell us how it went by filling out our Lobby Meeting Report form: www.tinyurl.com/RESLRF.

Quick EITC/CTC update (not covered on call)

Over the past few years, many of you have done great work to make sure Congress extends certain provisions of the [Earned Income Tax Credit](#) (EITC) and [Child Tax Credit](#) (CTC) that are set to expire in 2017. In particular, we've tied the discussion about the EITC/CTC provisions to the broader discussion in Congress on making permanent corporate tax breaks ("the extenders"). If these EITC and CTC provisions expire, over 16 million Americans will fall into poverty or deeper into poverty. We've also worked to increase the EITC for low-income workers without children in the home. In March 2014, President Obama proposed expanding eligibility for the EITC and increasing the EITC for these workers, and new House Ways and Means Chair Paul Ryan (R-WI) included an expansion of the EITC in his poverty report in July. As a strategy to build momentum, you added additional cosponsors to EITC/CTC bills in the last Congress, and some of you helped garner original cosponsors for similar legislation introduced in the House on March 4 ([H.R.1286/H.R.902](#)) and to be introduced shortly in the Senate.

March Action Training

Jeff Olson, RESULTS Bernardsville, NJ

Jos Linn, Grassroots Manager, U.S. Poverty Campaigns (West Des Moines, IA)

Until the actual budget proposals are passed, we have to be vigilant about protecting SNAP from cuts. The [March Action](#) focuses on calling the agriculture aides in your House and Senate offices to urging your members of Congress to stand up for SNAP with budget negotiations. The Action has talking points and background information to help you with your calls.

To help you prepare for these calls, this month's training will be a role play of a call to one of these aides. Use this information to prepare for you calls and see additional resources below to help with your conversations.

Role Play of [Call to Agriculture Aide](#)

Volunteer: Hello, may I speak to the aide who works on hunger or agriculture issues?

Aide: This is Jos, I'm the aide.

Volunteer: Hello Jos, my name is Jeff Olson. I live in Bernardsville, NJ. And am a constituent of Rep. Jones. I was hoping you had a few minutes to talk about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP.

Aide: Yes I do, Mr. Olson. Please go ahead.

Volunteer: Jos, are you familiar with the SNAP, which is the new name for food stamps?

Aide: I'm familiar with the program, yes, but I'm not an expert on it.

Volunteer: Then you probably know that SNAP is the largest anti-hunger program in the U.S. Hunger is still a big problem in our country and in [New Jersey](#). Between 2011 and 2013, over 11 percent of New Jerseyans were food insecure. That's why SNAP is so critical. In 2014, over 46 million people – including 1 of every 10 New Jerseyans – received SNAP benefits. And it really helps. The U.S. Census reports that in 2013, SNAP lifted nearly 5 million people out of poverty around the country.

Aide: Yes, we do know that SNAP has its benefits for the people properly on the program.

Volunteer: I'm calling because I am very concerned that budget negotiators may try to impose SNAP cuts in the fiscal year 2016 budget. Considering we just passed a new Farm Bill last year, which already included cuts to SNAP, it's frustrating to me that Congress would once again consider cutting this vital program. Is Rep. Jones aware of these risks?

Aide: The Congressman is not on the Budget Committee but he knows that in this fiscal environment, we have to keep everything on the table. You are correct that SNAP helps a lot of people but spending for the program has also skyrocketed in the last few years. We can't afford these bigger and bigger spending programs.

Volunteer: I recognize that SNAP spending has been higher lately, but that's by design because of the greater need caused by Great Recession. SNAP was specifically designed to respond to changes in the economy. It expands when times are bad to keep families afloat and then contract when things get better. In fact, SNAP spending has started to go down because the economy is showing improvement. If that continues, [SNAP spending will continue to drop over the next decade](#).

Aide: But with all those people now getting SNAP, there's the risk of dependency. Why work hard to find a job if the state will take care of you?

Volunteer: First, in New Jersey, 70 percent of SNAP recipients are children, the elderly, or the disabled, so they can't work. That's the same for the rest of the country. Second, 45 percent of people on SNAP are in families who already work. Third, do you know how much SNAP benefits are?

Aide: Not off the top of my head.

Volunteer: The average person in New Jersey gets \$1.34 per meal. That translates into \$276 per month for the average household in 2013. A full-time minimum wage job pays four times that; I think you'd be hard pressed to find lots of people choosing SNAP over a job. Plus, people on SNAP are on it for an average of only [8-10 months](#). They go **on** when things are tight, and then go **off** when they get back on their feet. That is exactly what we want; A program that people use only when they need it.

Aide: Yes, but how do we know these people really need it. We can't have just anybody getting SNAP. SNAP has a fraud problem.

Volunteer: I strongly disagree with your there. The fraud rate for SNAP is only one percent. 99 percent of SNAP benefits go to eligible households. That's not something we should demonize; it's something we should celebrate. If SNAP were a corporate program, people would be holding it up as a model of efficiency. The truth is that despite all the rhetoric we hear on TV and the internet, SNAP works, and we need to make sure it keeps working.

Aide: So Mr. Olson, what exactly are you wanting?

Volunteer: I would like for him to weigh in with Budget Committee members and urge them to leave SNAP cuts or efforts to make it into a block grant to states out of the Budget Resolution. Specifically, urge them not to assign budget cuts to the Agriculture Committee, which would end up as cuts to SNAP. Will you ask him to do that?

Aide: I will certainly tell him what we've discussed and see what he says. I cannot promise he'll talk to them. He has some serious concerns about SNAP, which I've expressed in our conversation.

Volunteer: That's a start, Jos. I appreciate it. May I follow up with you in a few days to see what he says? And if he is still hesitant, would you be willing to share his specific objections so we can better understand his position? Maybe we could discuss this with Rep. Jones directly, if that would be possible

Aide: That's fine. I should get to talk to him later this week. If you call me Friday morning, I can give you feedback. As for talking to the Congressman directly, I can mention it to him but he's got a pretty busy schedule.

Volunteer: Great. I'll call you at 10:00am ET on Friday, if that works for you. Thank you, Jos.

Aide: That's fine, Mr. Olson. I'll talk to you then.

Here are some resources to help you take action this month:

- **March Action Sheet:** http://www.results.org/take_action/march_2015_u.s._poverty_action/
- **RESULTS SNAP E-mail Action Alert:**
http://capwiz.com/results/issues/alert/?alertid=64169986&MC_plugin=2201
- **Poverty Data by State and Congressional District** from TalkPoverty.org:
www.talkpoverty.org/poverty
- **State fact sheets on SNAP** from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:
<http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3886>
- **Sample conversation with agriculture aide:**
http://www.results.org/take_action/u.s._poverty_laser_talk_talking_to_an_aide_about_protecting_snap/
- **Contact information for members of Congress and their staff:**
<http://capwiz.com/results/dbq/officials/>

If you have questions or need help with taking action this month, please don't hesitate to contact Jos Linn (jlinn@results.org) or Meredith Dodson (dodson@results.org) for coaching and assistance.

Shares

Sarah Miller, RESULTS St. Louis and 2014-15 REAL Change Fellow

My name is Sarah Miller and I'm a REAL Change fellow. I am a 6th grade social studies teacher in St. Louis and also the group leader for the St. Louis group. I am so grateful that I attended the REAL Change Mid-year Retreat a couple weekends ago. I learned a lot of helpful information about how the budget process works and why SNAP is in danger which was so helpful in taking it back to my group and explaining why this is so important. Meredith also presented a really powerful image of why the Earned Income Tax Credit is so crucial - that for every \$1 American Europeans have, American Africans have 6 cents! Secondly, I got a chance to catch up with other REAL Changers about the work we do. Third, we had time to get ideas and plan our event for this March to raise awareness / do something about threats to SNAP AND promote RESULTS, too. Last, lobby day was amazing. I sat in two meetings - with top aides working with my senators - and told them how much I see programs like SNAP affecting education. Because I'm a teacher, I was able to give them personal examples - like a story about how parents ask us to recommend their child for summer school so that their child receives free or reduced

breakfast and lunch for another month during the summer. I know when my students have eaten and when they haven't based on their behavior and ability to focus. I know that education improvement is a buzz word in this political arena so the more loudly we speak about the ways that food affects education, I think the more power we can get with some of our more skeptical senators.

I also want to give a shout-out to the REAL Change experience in general. It is an amazing experience and totally worth it! I hope you will apply for this year's [REAL Change Program](#).

Reba Carethers, RESULTS Houston and 2014-15 REAL Change Fellow

The REAL Change retreat was informative and motivational. The retreat tied together nicely the behind the scene with the on the ground work we have been doing. I never truly appreciated the effort that went into creating and passing bills/policies/laws. Now that I know I feel even more motivated to advocate for an end to poverty by demanding that we protect the programs that are designed to alleviate poverty. For me, Real Change provides the tools and support in order for me to become an efficient advocate. I can confidently email or walk up to my member of Congress (MoC) and say "No one's quality of life should be determined by where they are born, or no child should die of vaccine preventable diseases, or please do not support cutting funding to a program that lifts 5 million people out of poverty." Whereas before I never would have known the name of my MoC. I would never have known that their vote matters in terms of legislation. More importantly, I never would have known they care about what we, as constituents in their district, have to say. Real Change revealed to me a platform I did not know existed. I truly believe that poverty is unjust and man-made and can be undone by the actions of human beings. I think what we all do is a prime example of human action working to undo unjust poverty.

Anita Lee, RESULTS San Fernando Valley, CA

Hi, I'm Anita Lee from the San Fernando Valley Domestic Group and I want to share with you about our regional workday with Meredith in February.

RESULTS advocates from Sunny Southern California met on a VERY rare rainy day to plan, learn and strategize for our groups coming year. Come back soon Meredith, please bring more rain. Members from Inland Empire, San Diego, Los Angeles and Orange County represented their groups.

Some of the things we covered:

- Goals and campaigns for the year and our strategies to convince our representatives to protect SNAP and expand and secure EITC and CTC.
- We talked to coordinate a legislative and Media strategy and how to work with local newspapers.
- Domestic Campaigns – Racial Wealth Gap, EITC, CTC and working with Senate offices.
- We received an update on Global Campaigns and talked about the miracle of vaccinations.
- We had a board update and also talked about what to expect at the International Conference and how to set up Lobby visits beforehand.
- Fundraising, Social Media & Publicity

I'm so grateful that we are having these regional workdays once a year because it's that connectedness and support from others in our state on the same mission. I think of SoCal RESULTS friends as my extended family... my ride or dies.

Announcements

Tade Mengesha, RESULTS 2015 Congressional Hunger Fellow (Washington, DC)

My name is [Tade Mengesha](#), our 2015 Congressional Hunger Fellow. I started last week and will be working with our U.S. Poverty Team through the summer. I am a native of the Denver, CO area and a graduate of Northwestern University where she studied social policy. I spent the first six-months of her Hunger Center Fellowship working for a hunger and health program in Seattle, where I researched and evaluated how the organization's meals program impacted the health outcomes of its clients. I will spend the next six months working on hunger and tax policy with us here at RESULTS. Welcome, Tade!

- **Don't forget to register to attend [2015 RESULTS International Conference](#).** This is the biggest event of the year for RESULTS, giving you the chance to hear from world-renowned speakers, get top-notch policy and advocacy trainings, and make your voice heard directly with your members of Congress. We've already lined up some [amazing speakers](#) including economist Jeffrey Sachs, advocate and "Nun on the Bus" Sister Simone Campbell, and long-time congressional ally Sen. Sherrod Brown, with more exciting speakers to be announced soon. And now is the best time to register. If you are an active RESULTS volunteer, your registration is only \$100! What are you waiting for? Registration is now open. Go to the [RESULTS website](#) and register today! You won't regret it.
- Also, if you are age 18-28, **please consider applying for our [REAL Change Fellowship Program](#).** We heard some great shares on today's call about this year's class. REAL Change is a year-long fellowship program for young leaders we hope will become the next generation of RESULTS advocates and organizers. As part of the program, REAL Changers attend the [RESULTS International Conference](#) (with most of their expenses covered by the fellowship) and then put what they've learned into action back in their home communities. This is an amazing opportunity. Visit the [RESULTS Real Change page](#) on our website and apply today! Applications are due by April 25.
- Remember that the House and Senate will be on recess March 28-April 12. If you have not submitted or followed up on your face-to-face meeting requests, please do so now to see if you can get on their calendar. If you do get a meeting scheduled, please let Meredith know so she can schedule a lobby prep call with you. And when you do have a meeting, please make sure to fill out our Lobby Meeting Report form (www.tinyurl.com/RESLRF).
- **Kristy Martino will be in Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina next week.**
 - **Birmingham on March 16:** Casual meet up at the [Urban Standard](#), (2320 2nd Ave N) between 7:00 – 8:30pm CT.
 - **Atlanta, GA on March 17:** Group start meeting at 6:00 pm at the [Atlanta-Fulton Public Library, Central Branch](#) (One Margaret Mitchell Square) in the 3rd Floor meeting room.
 - **Durham, NC on March 19:** RESULTS and [MomsRising](#) will host "Putting Working Families First: Building a Fair Tax Policy for All", an evening of discussion, training, and taking action. It will also be the start of a new U.S. Poverty group. The event is 6:00 – 7:30 pm ET at [Full Frame Theatre](#), 320 Blackwell Street #101 in Durham, NC.

- Contact Kristy at kmartino@results.org for details. Note that Kristy will also be traveling to **Colorado Springs, CO** to start a new group on April 9. If you know people in the area, please contact her for more details.
- **RESULTS Free Agents, March 17 at 1:00 pm and 8:00 pm ET.** If you live in an area with no active RESULTS U.S. Poverty group, please join us online at: <http://fuze.me/27491886> or by phone at (201) 479-4595, Meeting ID: 27491886. Contact Jos Linn (jlinn@results.org) for details.
- **RESULTS Media Training, March 18 at 8:00 pm ET.** Join us for this training on how to get letters to the editor and op-eds published. To join, go to: <http://fuze.me/28074102>. To join by phone, dial (201) 479-4595 and enter Meeting ID: 28074102.
- **RESULTS Introductory Call, March 27 at 1:00 pm ET.** If you are new to RESULTS, learn more about our work by joining our next RESULTS Intro Call. The next call is Friday, March 27 at 1:00 pm ET. Register for this or another call on the [RESULTS website](#).
- **You can find these and other events in the [Events Calendar](#) on the RESULTS website.** Our next U.S. Poverty National Meeting will be Saturday, April 11 at 12:30pm ET.

Today is [National Pi Day](#) so be sure to have a nice piece of Pi!