

National Meeting Summary

Personal Story

Jamy Rentschler, RESULTS Des Moines (Ames, IA)

My name is Jamy Rentschler and I live in Ames, IA. I am a member of the RESULTS Des Moines group. Last week, our group got to meet with our newly-elected Republican Senator Joni Ernst. We set up this meeting with her to encourage her to stand against cuts to SNAP. At the beginning of the meeting, I had the opportunity to share with her my personal story. For the first 10 years of my life, my mom received food stamps. She was single, teen mom without a high school diploma. I remember going to the store with her and watching her tear out stamps to pay for our groceries. I also remember the cupboards getting pretty bare by the end of the month, but I do not recall ever going hungry.

Receiving the food stamp support was critical to ensuring that I had sufficient food and nutrition. Without that support, I doubt I would have been able to perform well in school and reach the achievements I've accomplished. I went on to earn two bachelor's degrees, an M.B.A. and I will be applying for a Ph.D. in Sociology this fall with a research interest in how public policy impacts domestic poverty.

When I shared my story with Sen. Ernst, she responded by looking at me directly and saying that she wanted to work with me and our group on these issues. She seemed moved by my story, which helped us have a meaningful conversation with her about the importance of SNAP. She even surprised us when she brought up her own concerns about the cliff effect that occurs when low-income workers lose public benefits too early. Our entire group agrees that sharing my story in the meeting made a huge difference in how it went. We came away feeling encouraged that we can build a good, working relationship with this new member of Congress.

We live in a country that strongly values freedom, but there cannot be true freedom without equal opportunities. The SNAP program is critical to providing at-risk children and other vulnerable populations with sufficient food to meet basic nutritional needs. In order for children and others to flourish and to realize their maximize potential, ensuring that basic needs are met is not only critical, it is a necessity. I am living proof of that.

Welcome

Joanne Carter, RESULTS Executive Director (Washington, DC)

Thank you, Jamy, for sharing your powerful story.

Thank you all for your great work in generating media on SNAP. We've had at least 37 media pieces published in 2015 with most of them about protecting SNAP.

We hope you will all join us at the [RESULTS International Conference](#), July 18-21 in Washington, DC. Register TODAY!

Agenda for the Call

- Rebecca Lenn from Media Matters to talk to us about how to counter myths about SNAP in the media
- Ginnie Vogts from RESULTS Columbus will give us a campaign update

- Jos will lead us in a training writing letters to the editor so have you pen and paper ready
- We'll have some shares about your activities over the last month

Close out the call with some announcements

Guest Speaker: Rebecca Lenn, Media Matters (Washington, DC)

Bio

- Rebecca Lenn is the Director of Outreach at [Media Matters for America](http://www.mediamatters.org), a web-based, not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) progressive research and information center dedicated to comprehensively monitoring, analyzing, and correcting conservative misinformation in the U.S. media.
- She works to with national and state partners to prevent and combat the spread of lies and extremism in print, broadcast, and online media.
- Before joining Media Matters in 2010, Rebecca served as a political fellow at the Eleison Group, a political consulting firm helping groups and organizations better understand America's faith landscape and build relationships with faith communities.
- At Eleison, she worked messaging and research support to political candidates and faith organizations on issues of national importance, including clean energy, gun violence prevention, economic justice, and anti-Muslim hate.
- Rebecca is a native of Alexandria, VA.
- She holds an M.A.R. in ethics from Yale University and a B.A. in Political Science from Mount Holyoke College.

Presentation: Refer to slides 6-22 in the April National Meeting slides at: [http://www.results.org/uploads/files/2015-04_RESULTS_U_S_Poverty_National_Mtg_PPT_\(R\).pdf](http://www.results.org/uploads/files/2015-04_RESULTS_U_S_Poverty_National_Mtg_PPT_(R).pdf)

U.S. Poverty Campaigns Legislative Update

Ginnie Vogts, RESULTS Columbus (Columbus, OH)

House Budget Resolution passed [228-199](#) on March 25

- Cuts \$125 billion from SNAP over the next ten years
 - [CBPP estimates](#) that this could force 11-12 million people off SNAP or cut benefits for each person by \$55 per month
- Would convert SNAP into a “state flexibility fund”, i.e. block grant to states

Senate Budget Resolution passed [52-46](#) on March 26

- Changes and cuts to SNAP not specifically mentioned, BUT...
- Mandates deep cuts to “mandatory programs” which includes SNAP
- No reconciliation language for SNAP

Both proposals would also make deep cuts and changes to other programs (like cutting and block-granting Medicaid), which would have a huge impact on low-income families – see slide

Our goal: keep SNAP cuts off the “fast track!”

- House Budget Resolution use puts budget reconciliation to “fast track” these cuts/changes through Congress, but the Senate does not
- Budget reconciliation is not subject to filibuster in the Senate
- We must keep cuts to SNAP off the “fast track”!

What happens next?

- Congress returns to DC next week
- Budget negotiators will work on a final budget resolution and want to pass very quickly
- Our goal is to keep cuts to SNAP out of the budget reconciliation process -- no “fast track” to cuts!

What can you do?

- Continue to use media to pressure Congress to protect SNAP!
- Follow up from face-to-face meetings urging member of Congress to protect SNAP in the budget

April Action and Monthly Training

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

April Action – Generate Media about Protecting SNAP

(http://www.results.org/take_action/april_2015_u.s._poverty_action/)

1. **Mention a recent story in the paper** highlighting Congress, the budget, or SNAP. These “hooks” increase the chances of your piece getting published.
2. **Inform readers** that more than **1 in 5 children in the U.S. were at risk of going to bed hungry every night** (21 percent). Studies show that children who are regularly hungry suffer from weakened immune systems, slowed and abnormal growth, and anemia.
3. Tell them SNAP is our first line of defense against hunger in America. **The U.S. Census reports that SNAP lifted 4.8 million people out of poverty in 2013.** Most of the beneficiaries of SNAP are children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. (Include SNAP information from your state and congressional district at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ops/snap-community-characteristics>).
4. Explain that if SNAP were a corporate program, it would be lauded for its effectiveness with a **96 percent accuracy rate and only 1 percent fraud rate.** Instead, Congress is trying to gut the program.
5. Tell readers that **the House has proposed deep cuts and structural changes to SNAP**, which could lead to **11-12 million children and adults losing benefits**.
6. **Urge your member of Congress by name** to stand up for hungry children and families by opposing any budget that makes cuts or structural changes to SNAP.

April Training – Get Media Published about Protecting SNAP

Question 1: Why do you care about protecting SNAP?

- Perhaps you have a personal story about SNAP
- Perhaps you or someone you know has struggled with hunger
- Perhaps you want to respond to a myth or negative story about SNAP

- Share hunger statistics from your [state or congressional district](#)

Question 2: What is Congress planning to do to SNAP?

- Cut it deeply and increase hunger in America
- Cut the program by \$125 billion and change it into a block grant to states
- Enact cuts that could force 11-12 million people off SNAP *or*
- Enact cuts that could cut benefits for SNAP recipient by an average of \$55 per month

Question 3: Why is SNAP a program worth supporting?

- Share a story about how SNAP helped you or someone you know
- What would SNAP cuts mean for your local food bank?
- Share the benefits of SNAP to your [state](#) or [congressional district](#)
- Use positive fact to debunk a myth about SNAP

Question 4: What do you want Congress to do to SNAP?

- Tell your members of Congress *by name* to protect SNAP
- Keep cuts or changes to SNAP out of the 2016 budget
- Oppose efforts to “fast-track” cuts to SNAP
- Do the right thing!

Resources

- April Action Sheet: http://www.results.org/take_action/april_2015_u.s._poverty_action/
- RESULTS SNAP LTE E-mail Action Alert: http://capwiz.com/results/issues/alert/?alertid=64248626&MC_plugin=2201
- SNAP by Congressional District from USDA: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ops/snap-community-characteristics>
- State fact sheets on SNAP from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3886>
- SNAP Editorial brief: http://www.results.org/newsroom/media_brief_proposed_cuts_to_snap_could_mean_millions_of_american_kids_go_t/
- Contact Jos Linn with your questions (jlinn@results.org)

Shares

Facilitated by Tade Mengesha, RESULTS Emerson Hunger Fellow (Washington, DC)

Dee Ivy, RESULTS Albuquerque (Albuquerque, NM)

I was motivated to write a LTE about the continued myth of rampant FRAUD in the SNAP program for two reasons. First - Congress is once again attempting to slash these benefits to millions of Americans and I have no doubt that, just like last year, stories of fraud will start cropping up in their conversations as justification to cut SNAP benefits. Secondly, I'm constantly hearing folks commenting about poor people being lazy and choosing to NOT WORK, instead they just choose to lay around raking in the doe from Uncle Sam and, of course,

cheating or scamming the system in order to receive any government benefits. I'm not out polling people or even asking what they think – I just keep hearing it blurted out everywhere.

IF all of that isn't sad enough, we had a new visitor come to our Feb. special meeting for the Nicholas Kristoff Nat'l call. Towards the end of the call he wanted to know what we, as RESULTS members, thought about a woman who bought \$95 worth of sushi at a Whole Foods store here in Albq. using a Texas WIC card. I blurted out, "Actually, that's not possible." To which he replied "I saw it with my own eyes." Fortunately, another member made a more appropriate comment than I had and said "So what you're talking about is fraud right?" and then she went on to state the facts and then we went on to talk about the rampant fraud in the corporate and political world and so he kind of let it go.

Soooo – I wrote a LTE to kind of work out all my feelings about this stuff and also to hopefully stimulate more honest conversations about this much needed benefit. The truth of the matter is - SNAP is a model government program with one of the lowest fraud rates of any government program (1%) has consistently meets its goal of providing food during national or personal economic downturns. I also shared in the letter that according to the USDA, the fraud that does occur happens more often from retailers inflating their SNAP receipts rather than with the consumer!

It didn't take me long to write and submit this letter online – actually about ½ an hour. And, as always, I've had a lot of friends and family offer their thanks for taking the time to do this.

Rev. Susan Rack, RESULTS Bernardsville (Bernardsville, NJ)

Writing Letters to the Editor is not in my comfort zone, I am a very anxious writer, intimidated by the blank page, but RESULTS made it easy for me.

In Jos Linn's Weekly Update of March 24th I discovered everything I needed to submit a Letter to the Editor regarding SNAP to 5 papers in my area.

In Jos' email, under the heading "Got 10 minutes," I found a link called "Submit an Online Letter to the Editor about Protecting SNAP." One click took me to helpful information, and under the heading Take Action I found a link "[SNAP LTE alert](#)".

When I clicked it, I found myself on a TAKE ACTION page where I simply confirmed my zip code and clicked "go", which took me to a list of my area's newspapers. I selected 5 papers and then scrolled down to a pre-written Letter to the Editor of optimal length which I personalized to express my particular perspective. My letter got a little long, but the Impact Meter that gages the effectiveness of your letter according to length helped me edit my letter to the meatiest points. Then I completed the Sender Information at the bottom of the page and clicked "Send Message."

Click, click, click, handy information, a little word-smithing, click, and DONE.

I had no idea it could be that easy.

Because I am an anxious writer it took me longer than 10 minutes to complete my letter but, had I not personalized the letter, it would have taken me less than 10 minutes. Not a bad investment of time for the potential of being published in up to 5 papers in your area.

It felt great when I got a flurry of emails from folks who saw my Letter in the NJ Star Ledger. Of course, I immediately posted the link to the Letter from the paper's online version on our RESULTS Bernardsville Facebook page, as well as my personal and church Facebook pages.

Diana Tyree-Eddy, RESULTS Bremerton (Bremerton, WA)

A little over a week ago my RESULTS partner Allan Newberg had an extra ticket to a local democratic fundraiser for Sen. Patty Murray. I jumped at the chance to go. We asked Meredith to give us coaching on what strategically would be the best things to say. We were delighted that another RESULTS partner Judy Arbogast was there as well, so we got a lot of attention for RESULTS. The event was held at a local credit union president's home. Many local grass top leaders were present, as well as retired congressman Norm Dicks, who used to play with my brother when they were young.

Sen. Murray worked the room and I got to shake her hand and thank her for her recent work on the minimum wage and child care per Meredith's coaching. Plus I thanked her for destigmatizing SNAP. I told her about how I work as a special ed teacher and 65% of the kids at my school qualify for free and reduced lunch. I shared that my students will do their school assignments for apples and oranges as incentives since they don't get fruit at home. This clearly moved her and I made the request about not letting SNAP be held as a bargaining chip during budget negotiations.

Later she spoke to everyone in the room and Alan thanked her for working with RESULTS throughout the years she's held office, then she thanked RESULTS for all their work foreign and domestic. We three RESULTS volunteers stood and introduced ourselves and I spoke of the SNAP request again, and the room clapped. There were about 100 people present. Sen. Murray commented that Bremerton is a community that truly cares for their neighbors in regard to social services. I may have recruited a newly retired assistant school superintendent and former special ed teacher.

Announcements

Kathleen Duncan, RESULTS Houston (Houston, TX)

- **Remember that the [2015 RESULTS International Conference](#) only three months away.** We are very excited about this year's conference, which will be part conference, part birthday party. This is RESULTS' 35th Anniversary and boy do we have the guests coming to celebrate with us. Economist Jeffrey Sachs, Nuns on the Bus Sister Simone Campbell, Sen. Sherrod Brown, and World Bank President Dr. Jim Kim coming, Early Childhood Advocate Joan Lombardi and just announced, Prof. Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Peace Prize-winning founder of the Grameen Bank, will all speak at this year's conference. Now, how could you miss that? Registration is now open for active RESULTS volunteers, it's only \$100 to register. Go to the [RESULTS website](#) and register today! And please note that you have until June 1 to book your hotel room.

- Now if all that doesn't have you clamoring to register right now, or if you are a new person coming to the conference, why don't plan to join our **"Why You Should Come to the RESULTS Conference"** webinar this Thursday night, April 16 at 8:00pm ET. Spend 30 minutes with us learning about the conference and getting your questions answered. Join online at <http://fuze.me/28157166> or by phone at (201) 479-4595, meeting ID 28157166. We will also repeat this call on Friday, April 17 at 1:00 pm ET.
- Also, if you are age 18-28 or you know someone who is, **urge them to apply for our REAL Change Fellowship Program**. REAL Change is a year-long fellowship program for young leaders we hope will become the next generation of RESULTS advocates and organizers. REAL Changers attend the [RESULTS International Conference](#) and then put what they've learned into action back in their home communities. This is an amazing opportunity. Urge young leaders you know to [apply today!](#) Applications are due by April 25.
- Remember, if you had a lobby meeting recently, please let us know how it went by filling out our Lobby Meeting Report form (www.tinyurl.com/RESLRF).
- **RESULTS Free Agents, April 21 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 Introductory Call, April 24 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, April 24 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, May 9 at 12:30pm ET.
- Finally, a few years ago we had a new young woman named Jami-Lin Williams attend our International Conference. She shared about her experience being in Head Start and getting SNAP as a child, a story she was later able to tell in an op-ed in the Baltimore Sun. She helped start the RESULTS Baltimore group and has been a great advocate for RESULTS the last two years. Well, she just got engaged AND she just got accepted to medical school AND today is her birthday. So, to wish her well, please unmute all your lines and let's sing Happy Birthday to Jami-Lin!