

I. This week, a number of news reports spoke to several factors that are leading contributors to food and shelter insecurity in America:

- “The pace of the foreclosure crises continues to accelerate.” The number of U.S. homeowners faced with losing their homes to foreclosure jumped 32 percent in April compared with the same month last year. 342,000 households (1 in 374 U.S. homes) received at least one foreclosure-related notice in April; the highest monthly rate since RealtyTrac began reporting on foreclosures in January 2005. (AP, May 14, 2009)
- “The large number of people on the jobless benefit rolls is a sign that unemployed workers are having difficulty finding new positions.” New jobless claims rose more than expected last week, requiring the Department of Labor to adjust their records upward by 32,000, for a total of 637,000 newly unemployed. This figure is up from 375,000 a year ago. More than 5.7 million jobs have been lost since the recession began in December 2007, and the number of people continuing to receive unemployment benefits set a record for the 15th straight week. (AP, May 14, 2009)
- “[T]he prospect of rising energy and food prices as a time of deep unemployment and shrinking wages raised concerns that strapped consumers could see their cost of living inflate even as the job market continues to get worse.” Much of the increase in producer prices in April was the result of a 1.5 percent jump in food prices, including for eggs, beef, coffee, vegetables and fresh fruit. (New York Times, May 15, 2009)
- “[T]he days of filling up the tank for less than \$2 a gallon are fading in the rearview mirror.” Gas prices have risen sharply across the country in the last few weeks, and are not expected to retreat any time soon. (Chicago Tribune, May 13, 2009)

While some economists have suggested recently that the country is near reaching the bottom of the recession, regular Americans remain dislocated or near dislocation as they face unemployment, foreclosure, increased food and energy costs, and the like. The EFSP program remains a highly regarded public-private initiative to effectively keep people in their homes or transition them into permanent housing, to help families keep food on their tables, and to ensure their power and utilities remain connected.

II. Key Findings of the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ Hunger and Homelessness Survey 2008* (http://www.usmayors.org/pressreleases/documents/hungerhomelessnessreport_121208.pdf):

Food Insecurity Trends -

- Requests for emergency food assistance increased in 20 of 21 cities that responded to this survey question. On average the demand for food assistance increased 18 percent over the previous year.
- The sharp increase in the price of food means that an increase in funding is necessary just to maintain supply at the previous levels.
- To cope with the increase in demand along with flat or decreasing supply, 18 of 20 cities surveyed reported having to cut back the level of assistance provided at food

pantries and emergency kitchens. Also, 80 percent reported a reduction in the quantity of food persons can receive at each food pantry visit.

- Survey respondents estimated that on average 20 percent of the demand for food assistance went unmet.
- All 21 cities with available data reported an increase in the number of persons requesting food assistance for the first time, particularly among working families stressed by the increase in food prices and the slowdown of the economy.
- Not only were more people seeking emergency food assistance, 88 percent of respondents reported they were seeking it more often.
- In most cities, the majority of persons requesting food assistance (59%) were families, and, on average, 15 percent of requests for food assistance came from the elderly.
- When asked to identify the three main causes of hunger in their city, 83 percent of cities cited poverty; 74 percent cited unemployment; and 57 percent cited the high cost of housing.
- Based upon economic forecasts, it is expected that there will be an increase in demand for emergency food assistance in 2009

Homelessness Trends –

- Of the 25 cities that responded to the survey, 19 (83%) reported an increase in homelessness over the prior year. When asked specifically about family homelessness, 16 respondents reported an increase.
- In most cities, the demand for shelter exceeded capacity on certain nights during the year.
- Several cities report having waiting lists for shelter.
- Twelve of the cities surveyed said that there had been an increase in homelessness as a result of the foreclosure crisis.
- When asked to identify the three main causes of homelessness for persons in families and for single adults and unaccompanied youth, 72 percent of cities cited lack of affordable housing; 57 percent cited poverty; and 44 percent cited unemployment.
- Cities reported that the vast majority of households that received prevention assistance are able to retain their housing and avoid homelessness. The biggest challenge to homelessness prevention programs is securing enough funds to meet the growing need for assistance.

[*27 member cities are currently represented on the task force, and 25 responded to the 2008 survey: Boston, MA; Charleston, SC; Charlotte, NC; Chicago, IL; Cleveland, OH; Dallas, TX; Denver, CO; Des Moines, IA; Gastonia, NC; Kansas City, MO; Los Angeles, CA; Louisville, KY; Miami, FL; Minneapolis, MN; Nashville, TN; Philadelphia, PA; Phoenix, AZ; Portland, OR; Providence, RI; Salt Lake City, UT; San Francisco, CA; Santa Monica, CA; Seattle, WA; St. Paul, MN; and Trenton, NJ.]

III. To Advocate:

Urge your House and Senate Members of Congress to call on their respective Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee to reject the President's request and to maintain the EFSP program at FY2009 levels.

You can locate your congressional offices online at: [thomas.loc.gov](https://www.thomas.loc.gov), or by calling the Congressional Operator at either 202-224-3121 or 202-225-3121.