

August 4, 2019

LT. GOVERNOR ZUCKERMAN NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 4, 2019

With summer in full bloom and farms around the state going full bore, it is sad to think that there are many Vermonters who are food insecure. According to Hunger Free Vermont there are about 70,000 Vermonters who rely on 3SquaresVT (also known as SNAP or food stamps) and 1/3 of those are children. On July 23rd, I was appalled to learn President Trump proposed changing eligibility requirements to drastically reduce the number of working families eligible for this support. ***(Please note these changes have not yet been approved and, if you currently use or require this program, you should still complete all required paperwork to receive benefits.)***

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has been in place for more than 20 years. In 2018, Vermont received over \$105 million to allocate to our 3SquaresVT program. This money helps support working, elderly and disabled Vermonters and their families put food on the table. It is also a valuable asset to our economy as it is spent in local grocery stores and farmers markets. On the back, you can learn more about this vital program and how you can submit a public comment in support of it.

I also wanted to encourage you to visit a local farm during **Open Farm Week, August 9-15, 2019**. This uniquely Vermont program is celebrating its 5th year of inviting the public to explore a farm and meet the farmers, plants, and animals that bring your favorite products to your plate. With more than 72 different events taking place in every county of Vermont, you are sure to find a location close to home where you can learn more about where your food comes from and what farming in Vermont is like. You will find more information about this program and events on the back.

I hope you are finding opportunities to explore Vermont this summer. I look forward to talking with you at an event in your area.

Thank you for staying connected.



UPCOMING EVENTS

August 12 8:00AM

Community Leadership Summit. Vermont Technical College, Randolph

August 14 10:00AM

UVM Extension Summer Farm Meeting. Bridgeman View Farm, Franklin

August 22

10:00AM – Clean Water Budget Public Hearing. Agency of Natural Resources, Winooski Conference Room (M240), 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier

6:30PM - Lt. Governor's Monthly Movie showing 'One Town At A Time.' Hardwick Town Hall, 127 Church Street, Hardwick

August 23

5:00PM – Chelsea Farmers Market. North Common, Chelsea

6:30PM – *Cookies with Constituents*. Chelsea Public Library, 296 VT-110, Chelsea

7:00PM – Zookeepers Library Tour. Chelsea Town Hall

August 28 12:00PM

Vermont Agricultural Hall of Fame Celebration. Champlain Valley Exposition, Expo North Building, Essex

For a complete list of events please visit the calendar on our website:

www.LTGov.vermont.gov

HELP PROTECT 3SQUARESVT

In July, President Trump proposed a rule change to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that could reduce benefits to as many as 3 million Americans. The change would reduce categorical eligibility limits that allow states the flexibility to better align income limits with the needs of low-income Americans.

Currently, because of broad-based categorical eligibility, Vermont can set its income limit to apply at 185% of the federal poverty line. This means a family of four making up to \$46,452 per year (before taxes or expenses) could apply for benefits. We know families at this level are struggling because our own Joint Fiscal Office calculates that for a family of four living in rural Vermont would need to earn nearly double that - \$84,736 per year - to meet its basic needs, including food.

In a VPR interview, Faye Mack, advocacy and education director for Hunger Free Vermont, shared an additional concern regarding this change. "The same eligibility process is used to determine which children receive free school lunches, and changes to the way Vermont determines eligibility could ripple out to affect even more kids." This means those schools that receive some funding to help them provide universal meals to all children in the school, could lose that funding. You can listen to or read the full VPR interview here:

<https://www.vpr.org/post/trump-admins-proposed-food-stamp-eligibility-changes-could-cut-vermonters-benefits#stream/0>

If you are concerned about the impact of this proposed, please let the Trump administration know.

They are accepting public comments on this proposal until September 23, 2019. You can submit a comment online here: <https://frac.salsalabs.org/comment-on-trump-cat-el-proposed-rule/index.html> or email:

SNAPPDBRules@usda.gov or mail to: Program Design Branch, Program Development Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Dr., Alexandria, VA 22302. Be sure to include Docket ID Number [FNS-2018-0037], "Revision of Categorical Eligibility in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance" in the subject line.

OPEN FARM WEEK

This year's Open Farm Week will take place August 9 - 15, 2019. Open Farm Week is a celebration of Vermont farms offering visitors a backstage pass to learn more about local food origins, authentic agritourism experiences, and the chance to build relationships with local farmers. Farms all over the state will be hosting special events during this week, some just for one day and others for several days or all throughout the week. Find your way through a corn maze, feed some pigs, learn how to make fresh mozzarella, meet some bees, explore a dairy barn, enjoy a farm-to-table dinner, learn about cooking with lavender, taste local cheese and so much more. Vermont farms are unique, diverse and welcome you.

Open Farm Week events are live now! This year features more than 72 events at over 40 farms across the state. Many events are free, but some require pre-registration. Not all farms are open every day, so be sure to visit DigInVT.com to explore the diverse event schedule and plan a visit. Everyone is invited to join the Open Farm Week conversation on social media using the hashtag #VTOpenFarm.