



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Liz Krueger Joins Governor Paterson to Support Further Increasing Food Stamp Benefits in Tough Economic Times

LIZ KRUEGER October 15, 2008

New York—State Senator Liz Krueger joined Governor Paterson today supporting an increase of more than \$150 million in Federal Food Stamp benefits for low- and moderate-income families. The additional Federal funding is a result of the State's change in regulations recognizing that residents of public housing pay for their heat costs through their rent payments, hence heating costs should be counted in their food stamp budgets, which is a determining factor in the monthly amount of food stamp assistance received by people living in public housing.

"I want to applaud Governor Paterson for his vision in pro-actively moving us ahead of other states in creatively expanding Federally paid for Food Stamp benefits for over 100,000 of the poorest New Yorkers living in public housing," said Senator Krueger. "As food prices soar and the economy plummets, we need to be even more creative in maximizing federal benefits through outreach to those eligible but not yet participating in this program. And, we need to use every option available to maximize benefits while urging our next President and Congressional representatives to further increase Food Stamp benefits as part of their efforts to jump start our economy and help states like New York deal with severe economic burdens. Food Stamps are a win/win for our State. Every new dollar in Food Stamps is immediately spent in a neighborhood food store or green market, helps low-income families

meet their nutritional needs, and creates jobs in both our residential communities and on our farms."

The Food Stamp Program is a 100% federally funded benefit administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It is the largest and most successful anti-hunger program in our country, yet it is estimated that in New York State only 60% of those eligible are participating. The monthly amount of food stamp benefits is determined by household size, and monthly net income after allowable deductions, including work deductions and housing and utility costs.

Senator Krueger highlighted that New York State has a high rate of working families with low earnings and high housing costs who are eligible but not receiving significant amounts of Food Stamps. "Because these are difficult economic times for our citizens, we must re-double our efforts to reach out to people who could be eligible for hundreds of dollars each month in Food Stamps. A recent report found that in New York, 27% of working families are low income and 69% of these households pay more than 1/3 of their income for housing. Of course they don't have adequate income to meet their family food needs." (Data from the American Community Survey, 2006).

Senator Krueger also called for the Senate to pass legislation she had introduced (S5723) that would mandate that needy families who are eligible for expedited food stamp benefits, receive benefits the next business day after completing their application. Current regulations can leave the family waiting up to 5 days before they receive food benefits. In the meantime, families may visit a food pantry, but are still only allocated 2-3 days worth of provisions, leaving them susceptible to hunger and malnutrition.

"The technology that the state has in place provides the opportunity to process applications within a day, so to make needy families wait 5 days is inefficient and inhumane," Krueger

said. "The Food Stamp Program was designed to reduce hunger and malnutrition. Making families, senior citizens, and children wait 5 days for food is the exact opposite of the program's mission."