

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Hart Research Associates

DATE: January 19, 2012

RE: Public Opinion On Food Stamps And Hunger In America

This memo reviews key findings from a survey of 1,013 voters conducted by telephone from January 11 to 17, 2012, by Hart Research Associates on behalf of the Food Research and Action Center. The margin of error is ± 3.1 percentage points, and higher for subgroups.

Key Findings

- 1. More than four in five voters say hunger is a serious problem in this country today.** Eighty-one percent of American voters think that low-income families and children not being able to afford enough food to eat is a serious problem, including 64% who say the problem is very serious. This perception cuts across political lines, with Democrats (91%), independents (81%), and Republicans (70%) all seeing hunger as a serious national problem. African-American (92%) and Hispanic (90%) voters are more likely to view hunger as a serious problem, but 79% of whites also see it as a serious problem.
- 2. A solid majority of voters consider the food stamp program important to the country.** Nearly three in four (72%) voters believe the food stamp program is very or fairly important for the country, including a majority (53%) who say it is very important. The support for the food stamp program cuts across the political spectrum, as Democrats (86%), independents (73%), and Republicans (54%) all see it as important to the country.
- 3. More than three in four voters say cutting food stamp funding is the wrong way to reduce government spending.** When voters are told that Congress is considering cutting billions of dollars to reduce government spending, by 77% to 15% they say cutting food assistance programs like the food stamp program is the wrong way to reduce government spending, with fully 64% of voters saying that they feel this way strongly. Democrats (92%), independents (74%), and Republicans (63%) all strongly oppose cutting funding to the food stamp program as a way to reduce government spending. When asked in November 2010, voters opposed cutting food stamps by a substantial but narrower margin of 71% to 19%.

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- 4. Voters reject the idea of cutting spending on hunger.** Only 12% of voters, roughly one in eight, think the federal government is spending too much money on hunger, while 78% of voters say the federal government should be spending more money on solving hunger (48%), or should continue to spend the same amount (30%). Republicans' support for cuts is modest at best, with only 20% of Republicans saying that the federal government is spending too much (as do 13% of independents), while 41% of Republicans want to see the current spending continued and 30% want the federal government to spend even more to address hunger.
- 5. More than one in five voters says they are worried about putting enough food on the table.** The issue of hunger is personal for many voters. Twenty-one percent (21%) of voters say they are very or fairly worried about not having enough money to put food on the table at some point in the next year. This concern is significantly higher among African Americans (39%), Hispanics (32%), working-age voters with incomes less than \$50,000 a year (35%), and voters without a college degree (28%).
- 6. A strong majority of voters support a major role for the federal government in addressing hunger.** Seven in 10 (69%) voters say the federal government should have a major role to ensure that low-income families and children have the food and nutrition they need, including a majority (51%) who express this view strongly. Only a quarter (26%) of voters say the federal government should not have a major role. Support for a major government role is strongest among Democrats (88%) and independents (68%), but half (50%) of Republican voters agree compared with 46% of Republicans who disagree.
- 7. Voters are less likely to vote for a candidate who favors cutting funds for the food stamp program, and more likely to vote for a candidate who makes it a top priority to reduce hunger in the United States.** Candidates who want to cut funding to the food stamp program are not supported in that position, as half (50%) of voters say they are less likely to vote for that kind of candidate (just 9% more likely). On the other hand, voters are attracted to candidates who put reducing hunger at the top of their priorities. Nearly half (49%) say they are more likely to vote for a candidate focused on reducing hunger in this country, while just 8% are less likely. Focusing on reducing hunger in America makes 43% of independents say they are more likely to vote for a candidate.