

Commission on Aging  
Information for Legislators & Candidates

**NUTRITION**

Older people must be included in State planning for food security. In Nevada, 18.8% of seniors are deemed food-insecure to some degree. Many depend on congregate meals served in Senior Centers or other community settings or home-delivered meals as their only reliable nutrition. These programs are primarily federally-funded, and the funding is diminishing as the need grows.

**Need** – Nutrition is a problem throughout the U.S. population regardless of age. In 2011, nearly one in five seniors (18.8%) age 60 and over living in Nevada reported being “marginally food insecure” in a report called “The State of Senior Hunger in America 2011: An Annual Report”. The U.S. average is 15.21% with the lowest being Virginia at 8.41%. Nevada had the fourth highest percentage of seniors who are marginally food insecure. Since 2007, the number of seniors experiencing the threat of hunger has increased by 34%. Data suggests that the economic issues facing Americans has had more enduring effects relevant to food insecurity for older Americans. The number of seniors affected increased 78% versus 39% for the portion of the population younger than age 60.

**Potential Model** – Governor Sandoval has identified addressing hunger as a core function of Nevada state government. A strategic plan was developed: *Food Security in Nevada: Nevada’s Plan for Action 2013*. One of the core goals of the plan is to use a comprehensive, coordinated approach to ending hunger and promoting health and nutrition, rather than just providing emergency short-term assistance. The Congregate and Home Delivered Meal program has provided food to thousands of seniors in Nevada and will be a crucial partner in helping the state to address the Governor’s goals. Funding is currently needed to provide on-going operational funding for the program. It is proposed that the state provide permanent state funding for the Congregate and Home Delivered Meals Program.

**Benefits** – Relying on federal funding leads to under-funding the program, as the federal budget has not addressed the growth of the over-60 population. Hunger is a symptom of poverty. Basic nutrition is essential to good health. Inattention to this need increases or exacerbates the challenges and costs of other health care programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, mental health, general medical services and education. Consistent and adequate funding for nutrition through these programs would ultimately save the taxpayers’ money while increasing the quality of life for the recipients.

**Implementation** – Funding for nutrition through the congregate and home-delivered meals programs should be included in the State budget to provide consistency in funding through supplementing the federal dollars.