

## **Minnesota On Track To Become Next Lugar Pilot State**

### ***A New Report Ranks Minnesota 31<sup>st</sup> out of 50 States for Feeding Hungry Kids in Summer Months***

**St. Paul, MN** - Minnesota is on track to becoming the nation's 27<sup>th</sup> Lugar Pilot State, due to dreary participation rates across the state in summer feeding programs for low-income children. Legislation pending in the Senate would qualify Minnesota for the Lugar Pilot (Simplified Summer Food Program), an initiative aimed at reducing bureaucratic obstacles for states struggling to feed children who rely on school lunches during most of the year. If the legislation passes, Minnesota will to join 26 other states already adopted by the program.

A new report from the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) ranked Minnesota 31<sup>st</sup> in the nation for overall participation in summer lunch programs. The report found that Minnesota could potentially administer summer lunches to over 160,000 additional low-income children and tap 2.7 million dollars in federal resources.

"My hope is that Minnesota will be able to benefit from the success of the Lugar Pilot Program," said Barbara Thell, Director of Minnesota FoodShare, "Inclusion in this program will mean many more kids getting fed during the summer time."

According to the FRAC report, the 13 states originally included in the Lugar program increased participation 41.3 percent over the last five summers, compared to an 11.9 percent decrease experienced by non-Lugar states.

"Minnesota is moving in the right direction towards helping children all year long," said Colleen Moriarty, Executive Director of Hunger Solutions Minnesota. "We have already improved participation in summer feeding by 12% from 2004 to 2005. Our next challenge is to build upon that success through legislative action."

The summer feeding program is an important tool for schools and educational programs. Summer meals draw children into programs that are critical for their development, health and well-being while their parents are working.

"Now is the time for Minnesotans to express their support for feeding hungry children," said Jane Brown, Executive Director of Second Harvest Heartland. The Senate is considering an appropriation bill that would add Minnesota as a Lugar Pilot state. The measure needs support from Minnesota Senators Norm Coleman and Mark Dayton and Representatives Gil Gutknecht and Collin Peterson. "It is simply not acceptable to let hunger funds and resources go unused when children are hungry."

### **Political Leaders Concerned**

This report was released at the El Rio Vista Recreation Center at Paul and Sheila Wellstone Community Center. St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman joined officials from the Department of Education, Minnesota Food Share, Second Harvest Heartland and Hunger Solutions Minnesota to discuss the reports findings.

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