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# CABHN FEVER

## It's Tax Time - the VITA Program Can Help You!



The VITA Program offers free tax help to low-to moderate-income (generally, income of \$39,000 and below) people who cannot prepare their own tax returns. IRS certified volunteers receive training to help prepare basic tax returns in communities across the country. In Connecticut, VITA sites are generally located at community and neighborhood centers, libraries, and schools. In addition to getting your taxes prepared for free, most sites also offer electronic filing (e-filing), which allows you to receive your refund in half the time compared to returns filed on paper.

VITA sites are open from the end of January through early April; most sites are appointment only. To locate a site near you call 2-1-1 Infoline. For a full listing of sites in the greater Waterbury and Bridgeport areas, go to <http://www.caahs.org/VITA/VitaSites.htm>

Don't forget to find out if you qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Claimants must have a valid Social Security number and meet the following income requirements for 2008:

A taxpayer's total earned income must be at least \$1 and earned income and adjusted gross income (AGI) must both be less than:

*\$12,880 with no qualifying child  
 (\$15,880 if married, filing jointly)*

*\$33,995 with one qualifying child  
 (\$36,995 if married, filing jointly)*

*\$38,646 with more than one  
 qualifying child  
 (\$41,646 if married, filing jointly)*

## "Snap" Into Action Against Hunger

A large number of anti-hunger advocacy groups across the United States have been participating in what is known as the **SNAP/food stamp challenge**. The challenge was created to spark awareness about the inadequacies of SNAP/food stamp monthly allotments, by challenging community leaders, organizations, churches and policy makers to live off of \$3 a day for a week or the entire month.

End Hunger Connecticut! collaborated with the Food Stamp Project last year to promote their own food stamp challenge. They found that

while living on a SNAP/food stamp budget for just a week was a struggle, it did not even come close to the struggles encountered by low-income families for whom this is reality.

### **Kick-off Event:**

March 3, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.  
 Charter Oak Cultural Center  
 21 Charter Oak Avenue  
 Hartford, CT 06106

For more information visit [www.charteroakcenter.org](http://www.charteroakcenter.org) or call Suzette Strickland at End Hunger Connecticut! 860.560.2100 ext. 305.

**Be a part of "SNAP Into Action Against Hunger", (formerly known as the Food Stamp Project.) Live on a SNAP/food stamp budget - \$3.00/day - for a week and explore what it's like to walk in their shoes. It's an experience you'll never forget.**

## Health & Human Services 2009 Poverty Guideline Update

Household size	Income Limit
1.....	\$10,830
2.....	14,570
3.....	18,310
4.....	22,050
5.....	25,790
6.....	29,530
7.....	33,270
8.....	37,010

For family units with more than 8 members, add \$3,740 for each additional member. (The same increment applies to smaller family sizes also, as can be seen in the figures above.)

For more information, go to <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/09poverty.shtml>

## Town by Town Data Now Available On-line

This town by town compilation of data shows the importance of social services programs for all needy residents of the state – and for people who need help in your community! It shows the number of people in each CT town who:

- receive HUSKY A health insurance;
- receive Medicaid;
- receive Temporary Family Assistance cash assistance;
- claimed the EITC (Earned Income Tax Credit).

Connecticut town by town information can be found at [www.larcc.org](http://www.larcc.org) under Hot Topics. Click on CT Needs Social Services Programs (2009).

## **Tenant Protections Again Jeopardized by Proposed Legislation**

Bills that would seriously impact the rights of tenants are actively being considered this year by three legislative committees.

**S.B. 373, H.B. 5538, H.B. 5871, and §21 fo H.B. 6388 would totally remove the towns from the eviction process.**

### **What is the law now?**

Towns play a critical role in the last stages of the eviction process by picking up and holding the possessions of evicted tenants for at least 15 days so that they have a chance to get them back. This has been Connecticut law for more than a century. The law assures the involvement of a neutral party and a time period for reclaiming the goods. This is not an “unfunded state mandate” but a health and safety regulation to prevent potentially dangerous direct contact between tenants and landlords and to try to avoid the complete impoverishment of evicted tenants.

### **What’s the impact?**

Their passage will leave evicted tenants at the mercy of their landlords and will in practice sometimes result in the loss of every possession they own. These bills, which have been rejected in previous years, have taken on greater force this year because financial stress on town governments has pushed the bills to the top of the municipal legislative agenda. These are pending in the Planning and Development Committee. A fifth bill is being drafted by the Judiciary Committee but does not yet have a bill number.

**H.B. 5978 requires automatic payment into court during an eviction**

### **What’s the impact?**

As drafted, it unconstitutionally bars tenants who fail to pay from presenting their defenses to the court. In practice, it also jeopardizes the

## **Walk Against Hunger**

This spring, Foodshare and Connecticut Food Bank, the two regional food banks that together serve over 1,000 anti-hunger agencies in Connecticut, will host Walks Against Hunger. These events are fun, family-friendly ways of showing support for those who struggle with food insecurity and poverty.

***Support the fight against hunger on one of these dates!***

- **Sunday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk Against Hunger**, presented by Webster Bank to benefit Connecticut Food Bank, kicks off at 1pm at Library Park in Waterbury.
- **Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Walk Against Hunger** to benefit Connecticut Food Bank will take place at 1pm at East Rock Park in New Haven.
- **Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Foodshare’s Walk Against Hunger** kicks off at 2pm from The Hartford Financial Services Group at One Hartford Plaza in Hartford, CT. Last year, 3,000 walkers were able to raise over \$450,000. This year’s goal is \$475,000!

Please be a part of these important events. Your support will ensure much needed help for those in need in Connecticut. To learn more, visit [www.ctfoodbank.org](http://www.ctfoodbank.org) or [www.foodshare.org](http://www.foodshare.org).

efficient operation of the housing court system, which is one of the best in the entire country and is fast and fair to both sides. State law already allows for these payments on request. By making them automatic, the bill will overburden and slow down the court and, by inducing tenants not to respond to the eviction papers, result in a large number of default judgments. This in turn will prevent the mediation by housing specialists which is the key to the success of the housing court system. This bill puts the entire system at risk. This bill is

**See Tenant Protections p. 4**

## **SustiNet Raised As Bill in Public Health Committee**

SustiNet, a proposal seeking to ensure quality and affordable healthcare for all Connecticut residents, has been raised as a bill in the Public Health Committee. Please contact your local legislators and members of the Public Health Committee to let them know of your support for the proposal and to tell them your story about why Connecticut needs healthcare coverage that everyone can count on. To find out who your legislators are visit [www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org). To view and contact members of the Public Health Committee, or to find out more about opportunities to testify at the public hearing, see <http://www.cga.ct.gov/PH/>. For more information on SustiNet, visit [www.healthcare4every1.org](http://www.healthcare4every1.org).

## **Concerned about state budget cuts? Confused about state taxes?**

Connecticut Voices for Children and CABHN are teaming up to provide educational forums and other information on the state tax and budget situation as the Governor and the Legislature work to adopt the budget for 2009-2011.

If you would like to schedule a presentation at one of your organization’s meetings or want to get on an e-mail list for current information, contact Ellen Small at 860-278-5688 ext. 208 or [esmall@larcc.org](mailto:esmall@larcc.org). We’ll work to fit into your schedule and tailor the presentation to your interests.

*If you would like to receive CABHN Fever by email, or be added to our mailing list, please contact Ellen Small [esmall@larcc.org](mailto:esmall@larcc.org) or call 860-278-5688 x208.*

## Governor's Budget Proposal Targets Cuts in Medicaid, HUSKY & Other Health Care Programs

The Governor announced her budget proposal to the Legislature on February 4. As she had indicated earlier, municipal aid was largely maintained and there were no proposed tax increases.



**To achieve a balanced budget, the Governor relied on:**

- about \$975 million in federal stimulus funds in 2009-10 and \$680 million in 2010-11
- about \$500 million from the Rainy Day Fund in each year
- significant cuts in state spending, including about \$125 million each year in cuts to Medicaid, HUSKY and SAGA health care programs

**Among the proposed health care cuts are many policy changes which have been proposed and rejected in the past, including:**

- co-pays and premiums for adults in HUSKY and increased premiums for children in HUSKY B
- elimination of most health care coverage for recent legal immigrants
- limiting adult dental care in Medicaid, HUSKY and SAGA to emergency treatment
- elimination of medical

interpretation services as a covered service in Medicaid

- adoption of a more restrictive definition of what is medically necessary in Medicaid
- elimination of vision and non-emergency transportation in SAGA
- a variety of procedures which limit access to prescription drugs
- elimination of most of the state-funded Medicare Part D Wrap-around for Medicaid and ConnPACE participants

**In other areas, the Governor proposes:**

- passing through an additional \$50 to families receiving cash assistance for whom the state collects child support.
- eliminating the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for TFA and SAGA participants
- increasing SNAP (formerly Food Stamp) eligibility so that people with incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level are eligible and eliminating the asset limit in the program
- cutting \$3.5 million for the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) budget each year
- eliminating funding for Individual Development Accounts (about \$600,000 per year)

## Make Better Choices for Connecticut to Fix the State's Budget



On Feb. 2, a recently formed coalition of advocates, providers, and representatives from labor movements held a press conference at Connecticut's Legislative Office Building to release "Better Choices for Connecticut," a proposal outlining revenue-generating options for mitigating the state's budget deficit.

The Better Choices for Connecticut coalition believes the quality of our state's public structures – public schools, transportation systems,

libraries, courts, public safety systems, libraries, and health care – make Connecticut a desirable place to live and ensure our economic vitality.

Better Choices believes the worst time to cut our public structures – healthcare, human services, education, and economic development programs – is NOW, when our state's economy is in a downturn.

To avoid devastating budget cuts we must make better choices. Better

Choices for CT proposes:

- Increase income tax rates for those who can best afford it – the wealthiest. This would raise additional revenues without harming the economy and create a fairer tax system.
- Close corporate tax loopholes. Flaws in our tax code allow many corporations to avoid paying their fair share, shifting the responsibility for taxes onto in-state businesses and individuals.
- Increase the sales tax by one percentage point. Any harmful effects of this increase could be limited by created a state earned income tax credit to help working families and by creating a small business property tax credit, which would also act as an economic stimulus.
- Scale back public subsidies to the entertainment industry. In FY2009, CT will lose an estimated \$117.5 million in revenues to the television and film industry through the "movie tax credit." These subsidies far surpass our public investment in any other industry or business activity through tax credits.
- Increase cigarette and alcohol taxes.
- Transfer money from the state's Rainy Day Fund.
- Maximize use of dollars from the federal economic stimulus package. Connecticut is expected to receive an influx of \$3 billion.

These options would help fill in the gap in the state's budget by generating significant additional revenue into the state *without* cutting vital public services and structures when our residents need them the most. More information about Better choices can be found at <http://www.ctkidslink.org/betterchoices.html> and [www.betterchoicesforct.org](http://www.betterchoicesforct.org). Organizations who wish join the coalition should contact Connecticut Citizen Action Group, the fiscal sponsor, at (860) 233-2181 or [BetterChoicesForCT@gmail.com](mailto:BetterChoicesForCT@gmail.com).

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**Save the Date!****2009 Riverfront Run**

The Riverfront Children's Center will host the third annual 5K+ Road Race and Family Fun Mile+ Run on Saturday, May 16. The Riverfront Run starts and finishes at Eastern Point Beach in Groton and follows a scenic route through the Eastern Point area. All proceeds of the 2009 Riverfront run will again benefit Riverfront's Tuition Assistance Program, which provides need based, Center awarded scholarships to some of Riverfront's neediest, most at-risk children.

The Riverfront Children's Center is celebrating 25 years of service to children and families in Southeastern Connecticut. The Center provides high quality, NAEYC accredited childcare and early education to children of working families who would otherwise be unable to afford it. Riverfront also offers referral

services, on-site support, and educational opportunities for parents.

Online registration is available at [www.active.com](http://www.active.com). Early registration fee is \$15.00 per person and \$20.00 on race day. Children under eight are free with a registered adult and there is a family maximum of \$45 for families. Come out and walk, run or stroll either course. Riverfront is also seeking Race Sponsors, prize donations and event volunteers. Contact Susan Bailey at Riverfront for further information at 445-2831.

**Tenant Protections**

**cont. from p.2)**

in the Housing Committee.

For more information about any of these bills, contact Rafie Podolsky at 860-278-5688 x203

**Upcoming  
CABHN/FESN Meeting**

**Friday, March 13th**

**9:30-11:30 A.M.**

**Location & Topics:**

**To Be Announced**

*The Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs (CABHN) is a statewide network of individuals, community groups and organizations which supports and promotes advocacy on low-income issues. For more information, please call (860) 278-5688.*

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CABHN (Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs)**  
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Hartford, CT 06106

## Federal Stimulus Package Provisions and Connecticut Impact

February 16, 2009

*(Prepared by LARCC; mostly taken from information from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities)*

Issue	Provision	Connecticut Impact
<b>Temporary Increase in State FMAP</b> (Federal Medical Assistance Percentages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6.2% base increase plus additional increase based on increase in unemployment rate.</li> <li>• To qualify, Medicaid eligibility levels cannot be more restrictive than were on July 1, 2008 and state must ensure prompt payment of physicians, hospitals and nursing homes.</li> </ul> <p><i>For Connecticut, base rate is 50%</i></p>	State Fiscal Year 08-09 - \$390 million State Fiscal Year 09-10 - \$600 million State Fiscal Year 10-11 - \$300 million
<b>Fiscal Stabilization Fund</b>	<p><b>Two block grants for states</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$39.5 billion for education</li> <li>• \$8.8 billion for other key services</li> </ul> <p><i>(plus \$5 billion in incentive grants and for other purposes)</i></p> <p><b>Education</b> - K-12 and higher ed; some to states and some directly to local school districts.</p>	Education Block Grant    \$443.0 million Flexible Block Grant        \$ 98.6 million
<b>Education</b>	\$44.6 billion to federal Department of Education, including \$13 billion for Title I and \$11.7 billion for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	
<b>Unemployment Insurance</b>	Federal funding for \$25 per week increase in unemployment benefits. Extends deadline to qualify for Emergency Unemployment Compensation extensions through Dec. 31, 2009. Includes incentives to modernize UI programs (provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act) and funding to help states address new administrative demands.	
<b>Child Care</b>	Additional \$2 billion through Child Care and Development Block Grant.	\$13.7 million

## Federal Stimulus Package Provisions and Connecticut Impact

February 16, 2009

*(Prepared by LARCC; mostly taken from information from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities)*

Issue	Provision	Connecticut Impact
<b>Child Support Enforcement</b>	\$1 billion to temporarily suspend Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) provision that reduced federal funding by 20%	\$1.1 million
<b>Training and Employment Services</b>	\$3.95 billion for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) training and employment services, including \$2.95 billion in WIA formula funding	Youth Services      \$11.1 million Dislocated Workers      \$13.5 million Adult Activities      \$4.4 million
<b>SNAP (Food Stamp) Program</b>	\$20 billion increase. \$19 billion to be used for 13.6% increase in maximum food stamp benefits, effective April, 2009, and \$290.5 million in state administrative funds. Suspends for 18 months the three-month time limit on assistance to childless adults.	SNAP benefits      \$152 million (to 240,000 participants) Administration      \$2.5 million
<b>Emergency Shelter Grant Program (ESG) (not for shelters)</b>	\$1.5 billion for HUD's ESG program for use only for homelessness prevention activities. Short and medium term rental assistance, housing stabilization services, housing relocation assistance, including security or utility deposits and moving costs.	\$17 million (estimated to assist 2,600 households)
<b>Child Tax Credit Expansion</b>	Temporarily expands Child Tax Credit on federal income tax by lowering the eligibility level at a cost of an estimated \$14.8 billion.	
<b>Making Work Pay Tax Credit</b>	Generally, \$400 per worker	