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Millions of people are hungry today

Mary Ann McGivern | Aug. 5, 2013 NCR Today

I'm writing this as I watch Bill Moyers' review [1] of the documentary "A Place at the Table [2]." Congress recently recessed without passing a "farm bill." But both the House and Senate did expand crop insurance and other financial underwriting in the bill despite fraud convictions and federal clawback of benefits that went, among others, to dead farmers [3]. However, the House cut food stamps out of the bill.

When our esteemed legislative body resumes its deliberations in September, the expectation is that the House will present a food stamp bill that cuts 5.1 million people [4] from the program. But recipients are hungry, undernourished and filling up on cheap sugar and fat.

Congress' explanation for the cuts is fraud and abuse. Yes, there are recipients who sell their food stamps to buy toilet paper -- or drugs. But when somebody gets food stamps then earns $10 or $20 over the limit, that income overrun gets listed as fraud despite the immediate federal clawback of the benefits (unlike the years it is taking to get money back from the families of the dead farmers). Similarly, when a mom transposes a child's Social Security number -- or the clerk who puts it in the computer makes the error -- that, too, is identified as fraud. Cumulatively, $25 food stamp overpayments to 10,000 people still totals less than $300,000 fraudulent payments to 10 farmers.

I've been out on the streets supporting the "Can't Survive on $7.35" campaign [5] by fast food workers. Some of these full-time workers are eligible for food stamps. Essentially, we are subsidizing profitable corporations by subsidizing their workforce. I am so angry I want to scream and jump up and down. So I march with the strikers.

The congressional complaint is that 48 million people are on food stamps and the program costs $80 billion a year, and this is too much. The recipients must be dependent loafers at best, cheaters and thieves at worst.

But in fact, to end hunger in this richest nation in the history of the world, we have to address it on two fronts: Give more in food stamps to provide good nutrition and require that our private corporations and our government agencies pay a living wage.

Source URL (retrieved on *2016-06-30 12:52*): http://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/millions-people-are-hungry-today

Links:
[1] http://billmoyers.com/episode/encore-the-faces-of-america%E2%80%99s-hungry/
[2] http://www.magpictures.com/aplaceatthetable/
[3] http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/31/us/politics/millions-in-us-subsidies-go-to-dead-farmers.html?src=recg
[4] http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/31/us/politics/house-plan-on-food-stamps-would-cut-5-million-from-program.html?src=recg
[5] http://news.stlpublicradio.org/post/stl-cant-survive-735-campaign-continues-rally-change