

Oregon senator highlights startling facts on senior hunger

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- In an effort to bring attention to the issue of senior hunger in America, Senator Gordon H. Smith (R-OR), held a hearing in the Senate Special Committee on Aging this week titled, "Seniors Going Hungry in America: A Call to Action and Warning for the Future." The hearing examined the current and future trends related to senior hunger in the United States. Senator Smith serves as the committee's Ranking Member and as the co-chair of the Senate Hunger Caucus.

"Food is one of the most basic human building blocks needed to sustain life," said Senator Smith. "Yet, in this country, about 35 million Americans are going hungry. In my home state of Oregon, more than one in 10 people experience difficulty in purchasing food each year. Unfortunately, seniors are disproportionately affected due to their increased vulnerability and lack of connection to their communities. We need to do more to ensure our most vulnerable citizens are lifted from the threat of hunger and are able to thrive as healthy individuals."

"One in nine seniors are at-risk of going hungry in America, the richest nation on Earth. Hunger is a disease that is affecting our country, but unlike other diseases we have a cure for hunger today. Because of Senator Smith's leadership on this issue, we now have a national forum to present these findings," said Enid Borden, President and CEO of Meals On Wheels Association of America (MOWAA).

At the hearing, the Meals on Wheels Association of America (MOWAA) Foundation released the findings of their report that quantifies the problems and causes of hunger that seniors face and how these trends will continue into the future as our society ages. Key findings included:

In 2005, over five million seniors, 11.4% of all seniors, experienced some form of food insecurity (i.e., are marginally food insecure). Of these, about 2.5 million are at-risk of hunger (i.e. are food insecure), and about 750,000 actually experienced hunger (i.e., very low food security) due to financial constraints.

Seniors are more likely to be at-risk of hunger if they are ages 60 to 65, poor, African-American or Hispanic, divorced or separated, living with a grandchild and/or renters.

In 2025, an estimated 9.3 million senior Americans will experience some form of food insecurity, almost double the number in 2005.

* In 2025, an estimated 3.7 million senior Americans will be at-risk of hunger.

* In 2025, almost one million senior Americans will suffer from hunger.

Senator Smith is working with Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) to ensure that seniors have better access to the nutrition programs in the Older Americans Act. The two senators also are working with Appropriators to raise funding levels for the congregate and home-delivered meals programs as well as programs that help seniors remain in their home as they age. Senators Smith and Lincoln were successful in seeing a small increase in funding for these programs last year, but, after many years of stagnant funding, they hope to bring funding levels on par with need.

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