

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE -- Fighting hunger

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By JOHN REYNOLDS

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Hunger is one of the most pressing -- and solvable -- problems facing Illinois and our nation. One in 10 Americans is hungry or at risk of hunger, and more than 1 million people in Illinois are hungry. The Illinois Food Bank Association, a coalition of eight America's Second Harvest food banks covering every part of our state, is working every day to provide food for hungry people. Each year, the members of the association provide approximately 80 million pounds of food to those in need. We feed nearly 1 million people each year and many are surprised to learn that nearly 40 percent of the families we serve are working households.

Yet more help is still needed and combating hunger effectively is a mission that needs involvement and commitment from all of us. In addition to the many individual donors, foundations and corporations that support food assistance efforts, the federal government also has an important role to play in ending hunger.

Legislation introduced by U.S. Reps. James McGovern (D-Mass.) and Jo Ann Emerson (R-Mo.), the Feeding America's Families Act, is an important step forward. This bill would provide a much needed boost for federal nutrition programs over the next five years.

The nutrition title of the 2007 Farm Bill recently passed out of the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Nutrition with many of the important improvements outlined in the act. We applaud this first step toward a stronger response to hunger.

We encourage everyone to think about what he or she can do to end hunger. Individuals can hold a food drive, donate or volunteer. Together we can end hunger in our community.

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