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## Assemblymember Mariko Yamada Takes the “Hunger Challenge”

*Could you live on a \$22 food budget for a week?*

**SACRAMENTO, CA** —June is National Hunger Awareness Month, and with the Legislature facing a looming state budget deadline, Assemblymember Mariko Yamada (D-Davis) is taking the “Hunger Challenge” for the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year as a state legislator. Hunger Challenge participants pledge to live for one week on the nation’s average weekly food stamp benefit of \$4.46 per day, or just \$1.49 per meal. Yamada will also blog about her experiences while taking the Challenge.

“The challenge is a reminder to me that for millions of Americans, hunger is a daily reality,” said Assemblymember Yamada. “While I struggle for only a week, far too many who cannot make ends meet face going hungry every day. Those living in ‘food deserts’ – often students, the disabled, and seniors – are particularly affected.”

The rules are simple: Eat breakfast, lunch and dinner spending only \$1.49 a meal for five days or \$22.30 total. The challenge is whether healthy and tasty meals can be prepared on the grocery budget of millions of Americans receiving food assistance. Assemblymember Yamada began her challenge today which will continue through Friday. She spent \$20.05 (and has \$2.25 in reserve) on the following food items:

1 dozen eggs \$.99, 1/2 gal. coconut milk \$2.04, 6 yogurts \$2.60, 1 loaf wheat bread \$.99, 1 whole chicken \$4.94, 1 lb. seedless red grapes \$.95, 1 roma tomato \$.42, 6 ripe bananas (reduced price) \$1.06, 1 organic firm tofu \$1.50, 1 cucumber \$.89, 1 box raisin bran \$1.99, 1 box corn muffin mix \$.79, 1 can tuna \$.89.

According to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), over 19 percent of Californians are unable to afford enough food to stay healthy. As more Californians have difficulty making ends meet, the number of people receiving CalFresh/Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program or SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) benefits has greatly increased. Still, according to federal statistics, California has the lowest participation rate of all the states. In Solano and Yolo counties combined, the under enrollment in CalFresh means we are missing out on an estimated \$70.5 million in federal funds each year.

Despite this widespread hardship, the Governor’s 2012-13 budget calls on legislators to cut over \$2 billion from healthcare and human services, while in Washington the U.S. Senate is debating a Farm Bill reauthorization that could cut \$4.5 billion from SNAP/CalFresh over ten years.

“In the face of yet another California budget crisis that disproportionately affects those with the lowest incomes and greatest need, we should encourage all who are eligible to enroll in this federally funded program,” continued Yamada.

Follow Assemblymember Yamada as she blogs about her experiences living on \$4.46 per day on the Yolo County Food Bank website: <http://yolofoodbank.blogspot.com/> and on the Solano & Contra Costa County Food Bank website: <http://www.foodbankcccs.org/index.php>. For information on how to enroll in the SNAP/CalFresh program in the 8<sup>th</sup> Assembly District, go to <http://www.myfoodstamps.org/yolo.html> or <http://www.myfoodstamps.org/solano.html>.

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