



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Reps. Bowen & Brostoff Introduce Heat & Eat Bill *New Legislation Would Reverse Food Stamp Cuts from 2014 Farm Bill*

MILWAUKEE – At a joint press event with the Hunger Task Force of Wisconsin, Reps. David Bowen (D-Milwaukee) and Jonathan Brostoff (D-Milwaukee) announced today that they were introducing a bill to restore Wisconsin’s Heat & Eat program and reverse the FoodShare cuts imposed on Wisconsin families by the 2014 Farm Bill.

“The families that rely on FoodShare to get by are the ones being left behind by this economy,” said Rep. Bowen. “A family living in poverty can’t afford a \$100 cut in their grocery budget. Restoring the Heat & Eat program would help get struggling families back on their feet.”

Heat & Eat is a state program that allows households receiving energy assistance through the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to qualify for additional FoodShare benefits. Wisconsin previously provided all families that did not otherwise qualify for LIHEAP a benefit of \$1, so that they could qualify for higher FoodShare benefits, but Congress increased the minimum qualifying LIHEAP benefit to \$20, cutting FoodShare benefits for more than 250,000 families across Wisconsin. The bill offered by Reps. Bowen and Brostoff would increase the LIHEAP benefit to \$21, restoring these families’ FoodShare benefits to their previous levels. Because the bill only reallocates federal money the state already receives, it would not require any additional state spending. Reallocating \$5.4 million in LIHEAP money would bring an additional \$276 million in FoodShare benefits from the federal government.

“Making this change is a no-brainer,” said Rep. Brostoff. “Without spending a single extra dollar in state funds, we could bring in \$276.3 million more in food stamp benefits and help more than 255,000 Wisconsin households make ends meet.”

Since the Farm Bill passed, 12 of the 15 states that participate in the Heat & Eat program – California, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, Montana, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington, as well as the District of Columbia– have taken steps to raise home energy assistance benefits to protect their citizens from the food stamp cuts. Support for the change has been bipartisan across the country, with both Republican and Democratic governors and legislatures making the necessary changes to increase food stamp benefits.

“The Heat & Eat cuts unfairly target seniors and people with disabilities living in subsidized housing,” Sherrie Tussler, Executive Director of Hunger Task Force said. “These vulnerable populations need community support to restore their FoodShare benefits. Hunger Task Force calls on the state legislature to help the frail and elderly.”
