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KENNEDY CALLS FOR COMMITMENT TO FIGHTING HUNGER

REPORT BY AMERICA'S SECOND HARVEST REPORTS INCREASES IN USE OF EMERGENCY HUNGER FACILITIES

Washington, D.C. – With the release of America's Second Harvest's recent hunger report, Senator Edward M. Kennedy continued the call for an increased minimum wage and denounced President Bush's budget cuts to low-income programs. America's Second Harvest, the nation's largest organization of emergency food providers, reports that food pantries, soup kitchens and emergency shelters are experiencing significant increases in clientele. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 38 million Americans are hungry or on the verge of hunger—an increase of 5 million under the Bush Administration.

“The report by America's Second Harvest demonstrates our failure to deal adequately with the devastating problem of hunger for millions of American families,” Senator Kennedy said, “Yet, President Bush proposes a budget that slashes low-income programs and ignores the needs of the most vulnerable members of our society in order to pad the pockets of the wealthy. One of the most obvious steps we can take to alleviate this hunger crisis is to raise the minimum wage.”

According to America's Second Harvest's report, 65% of food pantries, 61% of soup kitchens, and 52% of emergency shelters in the America's Second Harvest National Network have had an increase in the number of clients who come to their emergency food program sites since 2001. Their recent report indicates the growing hunger problem in the United States and is based on interviews they conducted with 52,000 clients, and over 30,000 America's Second Harvest agencies.

KENNEDY STATEMENT ON AMERICA'S SECOND HARVEST REPORT

The report by America's Second Harvest demonstrates our failure to deal adequately with the devastating problem of hunger for millions of American families. The organization's national network of food pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters serves 4 million people a week, many of whom are children and the elderly.

Thirty-six percent of families seeking assistance have at least one adult who is employed. They are working hard, but still can't make ends meet. Their families are forced to make impossible choices between food, heat, housing, or medicine. Yet, President Bush proposes a budget that slashes low-income programs and ignores the needs of the most vulnerable members of our society in order to pad the pockets of the wealthy.

One of the most obvious steps we can take to alleviate this hunger crisis is to raise the minimum wage. It's been ten long years since Congress last voted to raise the minimum wage, and with skyrocketing costs for housing, health care, and other basic necessities, more and more American families can't put food on the table at \$5.15 an hour. If we're sincere that no American child should go to bed hungry at night, we should start by guaranteeing that hardworking parents earn enough to feed their families. As this data demonstrates, it's more urgent than ever for Congress to Act.

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