

111 Sutter Street, #1509
San Francisco
California 94104
25 November 1969

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Mr. President:

On November 18, I asked Dr. Jean Mayer to arrange a meeting with you on behalf of the Community Organization Task Force which was organized as part of the forthcoming White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health. The purpose of this proposed meeting was to convey to you, personally and directly, the tremendous sense of urgency which members of this Task Force felt about the food crisis which millions of Americans now face as winter approaches, and to urge you to act immediately to alleviate this crisis. Members of the other Task Forces have since joined me in this request. However, no action has been taken on this request, and I am writing now to bring this matter to your attention formally and to ask that you meet with a delegation of Task Force members before the Conference to discuss this emergency and the steps you can take to eliminate it.

As participants in the White House Conference, we have confidence in this Administration's determination to develop a long-range national food policy which will finally eliminate hunger and malnutrition in America. At the same time, however, we feel strongly that immediate, emergency measures are also necessary to provide food at once to the several million Americans who are spending this Thanksgiving and who will spend this winter without adequate food, and whose chronic malnutrition will cost this nation heavily in premature births, mental retardation, high infant mortality, irreparable physical damage, and general suffering. For these millions of Americans, many of them children, a long-term food policy is simply not enough. What they urgently need is food now.

We ask you today to recognize the absolute urgency of the food crisis many million Americans face this very day. We implore you to take action immediately to meet this emergency. We urge this not as an

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ultimatum, but as a sincere plea; not as a substitute for the White House Conference recommendations, but as a necessary supplement to them; not as an expression of doubt about the Administration's intentions, but as an expression of faith in its willingness to act--and not simply to talk--when confronted with an urgent need.

We believe that you have the authority to act now to alleviate this crisis. In particular, we call on you to:

1. Declare a state of "emergency" under the Disaster Relief Act of 1969, the "Emergency Food and Medical Services" provisions of the Economic Opportunity Act, or some similar statute that will free funds on an emergency basis to provide necessary foodstuffs and medical services to counteract conditions of starvation and malnutrition among the poor. As a first step, you could authorize such programs in counties where the infant mortality rate exceeds the national average by 50% or more.
2. Revise the food stamp price schedules downward immediately.
3. Authorize the expenditure of Section 32 funds on food for the hungry.
4. Put an end to discrimination in the administration of food programs and require that pilot projects be developed at once to permit the poor to administer their own food programs.
5. Immediately provide active Administration support for at least the following essential measures now tied up in Congress:
 - a. The Senate-passed Food Stamp Reform Bill;
 - b. The School Lunch Reform Bill (including the Talmadge Bill, the McGovern Amendments, and H.R. 11651).
 - c. The Economic Opportunity Act, particularly its "Emergency Food and Medical" provisions.

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This list of measures is certainly not all-inclusive. It is intended rather to suggest the range of possibilities available to you. We earnestly hope you will give serious consideration to these proposals and that you will respond forcefully to the emergency which prompted them.

We appeal to you to take action within the next month to alleviate the food emergency which threatens many Americans. We urge you to take this action as the necessary first step in our joint efforts to formulate a meaningful, long-range food policy that will protect this nation in the future from the chronic malnutrition which plagues it today.

Yours truly,

Herman Gallegos, Chairman
Community Organization
Task Force
President, Southwest
Council of La Raza