

**National Commission on Hunger
Inaugural Meeting Summary**

Monday, June 23, 2014

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1. Meeting Overview

The inaugural meeting for the Congressional Commission on Hunger was called to order at 9:00 am, followed by a welcome address by Kevin Concannon, Under Secretary of the USDA. Under Secretary Concannon presented an overview of the state of food security in the U.S. and the goals of the USDA food programs, such as nationwide access to healthy foods.

After a short break, Mr. Scott Carter, USDA-FNS, reviewed the Commission charge and responded to questions and clarifications of the charge. Following Mr. Carter's talk, the members each provided an introduction and described their "vision" for the Commission (see Section 4 for details). All members agreed that it will be crucial for the Commission to interact with food insecure communities and groups that work to alleviate food insecurity. Summer programs and the interaction between food and economic insecurity were also common themes.

James D. Weill, President of the Food Research and Action Center, then spoke to the Commission on the components of the charge that suggest areas for improvement and research, such as the

- link between economic expansion and food security,
- importance of effectively utilizing existing programs,
- need for public-private-charitable-partnerships, and
- opportunity for research on nutrition programs and late-in-life outcomes.

Prior to breaking for lunch, RTI also clarified the distinction between the literature review currently under development by RTI on the current and prospective status of food insecurity and hunger in America (due on July 16), and the Commission's Report to be developed by the Commission and delivered in 2015. The Commission has no formal role in the former and may choose to disregard any or all of the information presented therein. The latter report will represent the Commission's viewpoints on policy recommendations to reduce food insecurity and hunger in America. RTI will provide whatever support is required by the Commission, but that report will be a report by the Hunger Commission.

Representative Frank Wolf; Tony Hall, Ambassador & Executive Director Emeritus, Alliance to End Hunger; and Representative Jim McGovern each gave a brief talk after lunch on the overarching objectives of the Commission. Each speaker stressed the novelty and importance of the Commission and the need for the Commission to come to a consensus to be successful in ending hunger in the U.S.

Coleen Norheim of RTI facilitated discussions among the Commissioners regarding the operational plan for the Commission and the anticipated research ideas of the Commission. The Commission voted on components such as transparent versus private voting and the decision to elect Co-chairs for the Commission at the next meeting. The meeting closed with a summary of the support that RTI can provide to the Commission. Key themes/needs/outcomes from the meeting included:

- Definition of consensus needed to operationalize the way the Commission works.
- Commissioners want to participate in field trips to communities, pantries, programs, etc.
- Additional funding is needed to support travel by Commissioners.
- Data and metrics for decision making by the Commission are needed.

- Commissioners wanted to select Co-chairs to emphasize bipartisanship.
- A list of action items for RTI, the Commission, and FNS, respectively, is needed.
- RTI report on hunger and food security must be distinguished from Commission's work.

The agenda for the inaugural meeting is included in **Annex 1**.

2. Attendees

Name	Type	Affiliation
Mariana Chilton	Commission Member	Children's HealthWatch, Drexel University School of Public Health
Spencer Coates	Commission Member	President of Houchens Industries, Inc.
Robert Doar	Commission Member	American Enterprise Institute
Jeremy Everett	Commission Member	Texas Hunger Initiative, Baylor University
Susan Finn	Commission Member	American Council for Fitness & Nutrition
Deborah Frank	Commission Member	Boston University School of Medicine
Cherie Jameson	Commission Member	Food Bank of Northern Nevada
Billy Shore	Commission Member	Share Our Strength
J. Russell Sykes	Commission Member	Russell Sykes Consulting Services
Representative Frank Wolf	Invited Guest	Congressman, 10th District of Virginia
Representative Jim McGovern	Invited Guest	Congressman, 2nd District of Massachusetts
Tony P. Hall	Invited Guest	Alliance to End Hunger
James D. Weill	Invited Guest	Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)
Katherine Hayley	Invited Guest	Assistant to Congressman Boehner
Pam Martin	Contracting Officer	USDA FNS
Courtney Smith	Invited Guest	Share Our Strength
Scott Carter	Meeting Host	USDA FNS
Kevin Concannon	Meeting Host	USDA
Andrea Anater	RTI Technical Lead	RTI International
Steve Beaulieu	RTI Project Director	RTI International
Coleen Northeim	Meeting Facilitator	RTI International
Jennifer Richkus	Meeting Scribe	RTI International

Not in attendance: Ricki Barlow, Commission Member

3. Action Items

Timeframe	Action Item	Responsible Party
Immediate	Develop and send out a contact list for the Commissioners	RTI
Immediate	Develop and send out a list of responsibilities for the Co-chairs	RTI
Immediate	Send Doodle for conference calls and next two meetings in DC (Sept. and Dec.)	RTI
Immediate	Develop and send out a draft statement that could be used for media inquiries	RTI
Within 2 weeks	Develop and send out meeting minutes	RTI
Within 2 weeks	Develop rough budget options for travel (including some field visits, public hearings and all face-to-face meetings)	RTI
Within 2 weeks	Develop a draft agenda for the July conference call	RTI
For next meeting	Provide some suggested working definitions for consensus that the Commission can consider for future use	RTI
For next meeting	Develop a strategy for social media and a website	RTI
Within 3 weeks	Consider serving as a Co-chair—nominate yourself or others	Commission
Within 3 weeks	Provide ideas to RTI on research needs or areas where RTI could support the Commissioners	Commission
Within 3 weeks	Provide ideas to RTI on your recommendations for “guiding principles/values” for the Commission (e.g., Ending hunger vs. improving it? Multi-faceted focus or USDA program-focus?)	Commission
For next meeting	Cherie will send information regarding consensus vs. compliance	Commission
For next meeting	Evaluate options for reprogramming funds to allow for travel reimbursement to Commissioners	USDA (Scott)

4. Introductory Remarks from the Commission

The Commission members introduced themselves and provided their assessment of the most significant issues and topics that they thought should be addressed by the Commission. This section presents a summary of these issues and topics.

- Look for common ground among a very diverse group of Commissioners and develop several “tracks” to move forward.
 - Fast-track movement on low-hanging fruit and items where progress and quick success can be demonstrated.
 - Organize mid- and long-term track for other items to stimulate energy and excitement beyond the charge.

- Bring the voice of the client to the table as well as the voice of people serving the food insecure to understand the needs and perspective of the people receiving/needing aid.
 - Engage the Commission by conducting hearings, field visits, special invitations, discussions with vulnerable populations and current state administrators.
 - Identify avenues to engage groups working with and on food security issues, such as creating education efforts to marshal health care professionals.
 - Look for ways to address issues and improve communication at the federal, state, and local levels simultaneously. For example, ensure that fire, police, faith and nonprofits “speak the same language” and develop jurisdictions with accountability.
- Use metrics to prioritize the improved utilization of existing programs before proposing new programs.
 - Ensure that the goals of the Commission are metrics based and long-term monitoring is incorporated in adaptive management.
 - Investigate ways to remove barriers to programs, such as the summer meals congregate site requirement and the waiver processes.
 - Use existing data and information to synergize existing programs and identify gaps.
 - Look for ways to make sure the U.S. can afford nutrition programs. There is a general consensus that the low-cost food plan is more effective than the thrifty food plan, but there are differences in cost.
- Clearly identify the problems related to food security, such as economic instability, health, and education.
 - Economic benefits from nutrition programs may be realized through reduced health care and education costs through appropriate increases in nutrition because of the cognitive and behavioral effects of food insecurity.
 - Look for ways for nutrition programs to help reduce economic instability, such as incentivizing work by making sure work creates a better life than unemployment (addressing the cliff effect), creating opportunities for education and training, and identifying areas, if possible, where living-wage jobs can be created (e.g., manufacturing).
 - Many illnesses are nutrition sensitive. Special health care needs can increase food insecurity in disabled and ill.
 - Identify ways to incentivize healthy foods (not necessarily restricting unhealthy foods). Look at the correlations between the SNAP program, consumption of sugar-sweetened products, diabetes, and obesity.
 - Persons with mental health issues may not be suffering from poverty but are not necessarily food secure.

5. Operational Components of the Commission

This section provides a summary of the Commission votes with respect to the operational items that were included in the agenda attachment as well as relevant points of discussion related to operations.

All motions regarding operational rule development during the inaugural meeting passed with 8 in favor and 2 absent. The motions were as follows:

- The recommendation included in the agenda attachment with respect to voting on operational issues was passed. It was, however, determined that for more strategic issues, a consensus might be needed. RTI will provide more information and suggested options for reaching consensus on more strategic issues.

- Voting via email if all votes are visible to the entire Commission is accepted.
- Co-chairs (one Republican-appointed member and one Democratic-appointed member) will be nominated and elected at the next meeting,
 - Responsibilities of Co-chair positions will be provided by RTI before the next meeting but will generally involve serving as a liaison with RTI and as a spokesperson for the Commission if needed (Commissioners may speak on their own behalf but defer major questions to the Co-chairs). Co-chairs may also help establish agenda.
- Informal, collegial decision-making process (not *Robert's Rules*) will be followed.
- Agenda items for the next meeting will be discussed at the current meeting and RTI will work with Co-chairs to finalize the agenda one week before meetings.
- In-person and virtual meetings will be scheduled via Doodle and convene when 8 or more Commission members are available. The plan is to meet monthly with the every third meeting being in person.
- RTI will develop and maintain a website for the Commission to share information with the public (e.g., bios, current progress), allow public comments to be submitted to the panel, and provide a private space for the Commission (e.g., field visit reports, publications).
- Minutes will be provided within 2 weeks to the Commission for comment, additions, and suggestions. Then they will be voted on at the next meeting.
- All communication should include Steve, Scott, and Andrea until Co-chairs are selected to communicate with RTI and USDA FNS.

The Commission will meet every month; however, only one out of every three meetings will be in person. The intervening two meetings will be conducted by phone, webinar, or other agreed upon method. In addition, some meetings may also be grouped with annual conferences that most members attend or with field visits, public hearings, or other outreach events to cut down on cost and time commitments. Scott will investigate reprogramming funds for travel costs (most members were uncomfortable with invitational-type funds), and RTI will develop a budget estimate for future meetings and other travel events (approximately 4 field visits and 2 hearings). Not all members may need to attend field visits, especially if visits to all seven districts occur, but attending members would be required to report back to the Commission with all quantitative and qualitative information available. Hearings and other outreach events would most likely be attended by all members. RTI will be available to attend all events (e.g., public hearings, field visits) to create written reports and facilitate the event.

In the absence of Co-chairs to act as public spokespersons, members have elected the option to speak generally about the panel (e.g., the Commission has met, look forward to meeting again, share the national charge, still have to organize, glad that Congress is addressing this issue) and/or respond to questions on their own behalf. Any specific media requests about the Commission should be directed to RTI International until Co-chairs are elected. RTI will also draft a statement for Commission members to cite during statements when needed.

RTI then discussed the types of support that they can provide to the Commission:

- Wide variety of research and analysis as a nonprofit research organization
- Budget development
- Development of a website for transparency, communications, timelines, schedules, parking information, etc.
- Production of reports and white papers

- Preparation of statements, minutes, and field reports.

6. Invited Speaker Summaries and Commission Discussions

James D. Weill, President of the Food Research and Action Center, spoke to the Commission on four key areas for the Commission to address. First, Mr. Weill suggested that the way forward isn't just a matter of weighing current public programs but will involve addressing long-term wage stagnation and the need for broad economic expansion. Second, he noted the need for faith and charitable sectors, but the relative size of the sectors compared to the federal programs makes them unable to cover the needs gap. Next, he recommended the Commission look for ways to more effectively use existing programs such as SNAP and summer feeding programs. Lastly, Mr. Weill encouraged the Commission to promote public-private partnerships, not just in the food security sector, but also with regard to better wages, job opportunities and job benefits, access to healthy foods, transportation, education, and food program research.

Representative Frank Wolf then addressed the Commission, compelling them to set the ultimate goal for ending hunger, not just alleviating it. He encouraged the Commission to aim for a unanimous, nonpartisan report. He added that differing views would cause additional resistance in Congress and encouraged the Commission to seek funds for hearings and field visits through FNS.

Mr. Tony P. Hall, Ambassador & Executive Director Emeritus of the Alliance to End Hunger, also reiterated the need for a nonpartisan Commission and the importance of getting out to see hunger and hunger programs firsthand. Mr. Hall commented that this is the first Commission on Hunger since the Nixon administration, making it all the more important to use any and all tools to develop the best and strongest recommendations for going forward. The Commission then discussed the complicated interactions of hunger with obesity and the need to help all poor and fixed-income individuals—not just those people that are part of the USDA programs.

The last invited speaker to talk with the Commission was Representative Jim McGovern, who also urged the Commission to create pressure and highlight the food insecurity issue and press for a White House conference. He suggested that the Commission create the unifying plan to end hunger and get out and visit areas to understand the holes in the safety net. Representative McGovern discussed the need for new terms and flexibility since all of the current hunger terminology is politically charged, such as block grants, and that corporations will need to be involved. Programs will need to be enhanced so that individuals do not go hungry because they “make too much” or don't have access to healthy food during summers, blizzards, or weekends. He concluded the discussion by recommending that the Commission be creative and go beyond USDA programs, be nonpartisan, and make a comprehensive case that shows a light at the end of the tunnel.

Other discussions during the day included a request to have representatives from Social Security, FAI, and other think tanks speak to the Commission on current issues; a suggestion to review publications on disabilities and food insecurities; a desire to review the summer feeding program; and a recommendation that the Commission address the cliff effect. Vulnerable populations include families with disability, elders, families with very young children (only visible to parents), Native Americans, new Americans, immigrants, and children who are citizens but parents may be immigrants.

The Commission also investigated the purpose and scope of the RTI report due July 16 with respect to the Commission's purpose and scope. The RTI report will summarize research on key determinants of food security from an extensive review of published, peer-reviewed literature, proceedings, and meeting data. The report will also include a discussion of the methodology used, analysis of successful and unsuccessful food security strategies from 2008 on, and a summary of useful research and data gaps. The RTI report will be disseminated broadly to the President and Congress and will clarify that the work has been done to provide a baseline to the Commission and not developed by the Commission.

Annex 1: Meeting Agenda

Inaugural Meeting Monday, June 23, 2014 (8:30 am–4:15 pm ET)

USDA Whitten Building, Room 104A
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

8:30 am - 9:00 am	Arrival, Coffee/Refreshments, and Informal Introductions
9:00 am - 9:30 am	Welcome Kevin Concannon, Under Secretary, USDA
9:30 am - 9:45 am	James D. Weill, President, Food Research and Action Center
9:45 am – 10:00 am	Tony P. Hall, Ambassador & Exec. Dir. Emeritus, Alliance to End Hunger
10:00 am – 10:10 am	Overview of Commission Charge, Scott Carter, USDA-FNS
10:10 am - 10:15 am	Review of Agenda and Goals for the Day, Coleen Northeim, RTI
10:15 am – 10:30am	Break
10:30 am - Noon	Introductions by the Commission Members (10 min/member)
Noon - 1:15 pm	Working Lunch—Discussion of Major Goals for the Commission
1:15pm – 1:45 pm	Representative Frank Wolf
1:45pm – 3:00 pm	Operation Plan for the Commission
3:00 pm – 3:15 pm	Break
3:15 pm – 4:00 pm	Anticipated Research Ideas and Needs of the Commission
4:00 pm – 4:15 pm	Closing Remarks, Review of Key Decisions, Action Items and Next