



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

**JAN 15 2010**

The Honorable Bill Ritter  
Governor of Colorado  
136 State Capitol  
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear Governor Ritter:

As a former State Commissioner, I want to thank you for your efforts to serve low-income Americans in need during the current economic downturn. I understand the strain of State budgets at this time and believe that it is important to recognize State efforts to provide food and nutrition assistance to those in need, a group of people that includes many who never imagined they would need such assistance. Today, more than 37 million Americans are served by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), an increase of 9 million people in 18 months and a record high.

SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, provides 100 percent Federally funded nutrition assistance to your eligible citizens. Not to be overlooked especially in this economy, these benefits provide a substantial economic stimulus to your communities as every \$1.00 in new benefits results in a total of \$1.84 in total economic activity.

As this critical program responds to the economy as designed, we must also remember that it is important to balance access with program integrity. We must be good public stewards of the taxpayers' dollars and ensure that benefits are calculated correctly. Fortunately, the national payment accuracy rate for SNAP is 94.9 percent. We can be proud that the program has maintained integrity while increasing participation. This demonstrates that it is possible to achieve both high participation and high payment accuracy at the same time.

President Obama recently issued Executive Order 13520 which emphasizes the importance of a balance between access and payment accuracy. Improper payments, providing too much or too little, diminish the credibility and efficiency of government programs. Secretary Vilsack and I are committed to implementing the Executive Order and further improving the integrity of SNAP while also ensuring access to the Program. Our success is dependent on our partnership with you, the States, as the administering agencies for SNAP.

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The United States Department of Agriculture stands ready to provide technical assistance and support in your efforts to effectively administer SNAP, prioritizing the key components of both access and integrity. Thank you for your efforts to provide nutrition assistance to low-income Americans during the current economic challenges.

Sincerely,



Kevin W. Concannon  
Under Secretary  
Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

cc: Ms. Karen Beye  
Executive Director  
Colorado Department of Human Services  
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