

## Could you live on a \$22 weekly food budget?



Assemblywoman  
Mariko Yamada,  
D-Davis. Courtesy  
photo

June is National Hunger Awareness Month, and Assemblywoman Mariko Yamada, D-Davis, is taking the “Hunger Challenge” for the fourth consecutive year. Participants pledge to live for one week on the nation’s average weekly food stamp benefit of \$4.33 per day, or just \$1.48 per meal. (The national average for a meal meeting USDA guidelines is \$2.54.)

Yamada will blog about her experiences while taking the Challenge.

“The challenge is reminder to me that for millions of Americans, hunger is a daily reality,” Yamada said in a news release. “While I struggle for only a week, far too

many who cannot make ends meet face going hungry every day. Those living in ‘food deserts’ — often students, the disabled and seniors — are particularly affected by hunger.”

The rules are simple: Eat breakfast, lunch and dinner, spending only \$1.48 a meal for five days, or \$22 total. The challenge is whether healthy and tasty meals can be prepared on the grocery budget of millions of Americans receiving food assistance. Yamada began her challenge Monday and will continue through Friday. She spent \$21.34 on the following food items:

- 1 pound ground turkey — \$3.99 (50 percent discount due to 6/5/11 expiration date)
- 1 extra firm Tofu Lite — \$1.99
- 1 can chicken corn chowder soup — \$1.29
- 1 can black beans — \$0.79
- 1 can tuna — \$0.99
- 1 4-pack yogurt — \$1.49
- 1 6-pack Top Ramen — \$0.89
- 1 loaf 12-grain bread — \$2.49
- 1 red leaf lettuce — \$0.79
- 3 bananas — \$0.62
- 2 tomatoes — \$0.52
- 1 pack fresh green beans — \$2.00
- 1 can organic coffee — \$3.49

The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, helps feed more than 2 million low-income Californians, more than half of whom are children and 8 percent of whom are 60 years of age or older. However, according to The Hunger in America 2010 study, 6 million Californians remain food-insecure.

California’s Food Assistance Program, or CalFresh, is California’s No. 1 nutrition and anti-hunger program and distributes SNAP benefits to state beneficiaries, Yamada said.

“As our country’s economic crisis continues, the number of people receiving CalFresh benefits has greatly increased,” Yamada said in a news release. “Still, according to federal statistics, California has the lowest participation rate of all the states and loses \$4.9 billion in federal funds because of the state’s barriers to enrollment.

“In the face of yet another California budget crisis that disproportionately affects those with the lowest incomes and greatest need, we should encourage all who are eligible to enroll in this federally funded program,” she added.

Follow Yamada as she blogs about her “Hunger Challenge” experiences on the Food Bank of Yolo County website, <http://yolofoodbank.blogspot.com>. For information on how to enroll in the SNAP/CalFresh program in the 8th Assembly District, visit <http://www.myfoodstamps.org/yolo.html>.

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