

LES AUCOIN
1ST DISTRICT, OREGON



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

February 14, 1979

Dear Colleague:

Today I am introducing a bill which will make a significant contribution to providing a healthy diet for low income, elderly, and disabled individuals in this country. Since I first introduced this bill last year, I have received support from a wide variety of hunger and nutrition groups throughout the country.

The United States boasts a high standard of living but ironically, most of us don't have to look much beyond our own back yards to see the signs of malnutrition and hunger.

This bill is not a spending bill. My proposal amends the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 to allow a charitable deduction for the farmer who donates gleaned crops to non-profit organizations.

Legislation similar to this has already been adopted by Oregon and several other states. Its aim, and its result, has been the creation of gleaning and food bank redistribution programs throughout the country. Gleaning programs exist or will soon exist in the following states: California, Colorado, Illinois, Connecticut, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington.

Gleaning is the process of hand harvesting crops left behind after mechanized harvest or which remain unharvested because of adverse marketing conditions. A large quantity of this food now rots in fields and orchards when it could be taken and distributed to needy individuals. The granting of this tax exemption will give farmers an added incentive to cooperate with gleaning organizations and foster the development of greater numbers of cooperative food distribution organizations in this country.

Gleaning programs are run on a self-help basis. Needy individuals are organized to go into the fields and orchards of donating farmers and hand harvest what remains. In many cases, they are then asked to share a

portion of the crop with those who are physically unable to glean. Crops which can be readily gleaned include all fruits, vegetables, berries and nuts.

How successful are these redistribution programs? Has this excess crop reached the needy?

Oregon pioneered this approach to feeding the poor, elderly and disabled six years ago. Last year, 338,727 pounds of produce were gleaned in Oregon alone. The wholesale or farm produce value would have been \$38,350. In Oregon, 276 farmers participated in the donor program last year and food reached 1,834 households representing 5,439 individual clients.

Gleaning is going on all over the country. Although no national figures are available for last year's harvest, I believe the Oregon gleaning statistics accurately reflect the enormous food contributions which resulted from well-organized gleaning efforts last year...contributions which would not otherwise be made.

And finally, this bill provides some welcome news to our nation's farmers who are caught in a debilitating cost-price squeeze and have come to Washington again this year to dramatize their problems -- an opportunity to help themselves a bit while helping the hungry a lot.

The spirit of self-help, cooperation, and generosity evident in gleaning programs in Oregon attest to the eagerness of people to participate in this kind of effort if given the opportunity. My bill offers them this opportunity. I urge my colleagues in the House to support this legislation.

If you would like to join as a co-sponsor, please contact Amy Becker at 5-0855.

Sincerely,



LES AuCOIN
Member of Congress