

Judicial Watch Uncover USDA Records Sponsoring U.S. Food Stamp Program for Illegal Aliens

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Documents Reveal that Mexican Government Encourages Maximum Participation in U.S.-Funded Program

(Washington, DC) – Judicial Watch today released documents detailing how the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is working with the Mexican government to promote participation by illegal aliens in the U.S. food stamp program.

The promotion of the food stamp program, now known as “SNAP” (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), includes a [Spanish-language flyer provided to the Mexican Embassy by the USDA](#) with a statement advising Mexicans in the U.S. that they do not need to declare their immigration status in order to receive financial assistance. Emphasized in bold and underlined, the statement reads, “**You need not divulge information regarding your immigration status in seeking this benefit for your children.**”

The documents came in response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request made to USDA on July 20, 2012. The FOIA request sought: “Any and all records of communication relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to Mexican Americans, Mexican nationals, and migrant communities, including but not limited to, communications with the Mexican government.”

The documents obtained by Judicial Watch show that USDA officials are working closely with their counterparts at the Mexican Embassy to widely broaden the SNAP program in the Mexican immigrant community, with no effort to restrict aid to, identify, or apprehend illegal immigrants who may be on the food stamp rolls. In an [email to Borjon Lopez-Coterilla and Jose Vincente of the Mexican Embassy](#), dated January 26, 2012, Yibo Wood of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) sympathized with the plight of illegal aliens applying for food stamps, saying, “FNS understands that mixed status households may be particularly vulnerable. Many of these households contain a non-citizen parent and a citizen child.”

The email from Wood to Lopez-Coterilla and Vincente came in response to a request from the Mexican Embassy that the USDA FNS step in to prevent the state of Kansas from changing its food stamp policy to restrict the amount of financial assistance provided to illegal aliens. In a January 22, 2012, article, the [Kansas City Star](#) had revealed that the state would no longer include illegal aliens in its calculations of the amount of assistance to be provided low-income Hispanic families in order to prevent discrimination against legal recipients.

The documents, obtained by Judicial Watch in August 2012, include the following:

- [March 30, 2012](#) – The USDA seeks approval of the Mexican Embassy in drafting a letter addressed to consulates throughout the United States designed to encourage Mexican embassy staffers to enroll in a webinar learn how to promote increased enrollment among “the needy families that the consulates serve.”
- [August 1, 2011](#) – The USDA FNS initiates contact with the Mexican Embassy in New York to implement programs already underway in DC and Philadelphia for maximizing participation among Mexican citizens. The Mexican Embassy responds that the Consul General is eager to strengthen his ties to the USDA, with specific interest in promoting the food stamp program.
- [February 25, 2011](#) – The USDA and the Mexican Consulate exchange ideas about getting the First Ladies of Mexico and United States to visit a school for purposes of creating a photo opportunity that would promote free school lunches for low-income students in a predominantly Hispanic school. Though a notation in the margin of the email claims that the photo op never took place, [UPI reported that it actually did.](#)
- [March 3, 2010](#) – A flyer advertises a webinar to teach Hispanic-focused nonprofits how to get reimbursed by the USDA for serving free lunch over the summer. The course, funded by American taxpayers, is advertised as being “free for all participants.”
- [February 9, 2010](#) – USDA informs the Mexican Embassy that, based on an agreement reached between the State Department and the Immigration & Naturalization Service (now ICE), the Women, Infants & Children (WIC) food voucher program does not violate immigration laws prohibiting immigrants from becoming a “public charge.”

As far back as 2006, in its [Corruption Chronicles](#) blog, Judicial Watch revealed that the USDA was spending taxpayer money to run Spanish-language television ads encouraging illegal immigrants to apply for government-financed food stamps. The Mexican Consul in Santa Ana, CA, at the time even starred in some of the U.S. Government-financed television commercials, which explained the program and provided a phone number to apply. In the widely viewed commercial the Consul assured that receiving food stamps “won’t affect your immigration status.”

In 2012, Judicial Watch reported that in a [letter to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack, Alabama Senator Jeff Sessions](#) questioned the Obama administration’s partnership with Mexican consulates to encourage foreign nationals, migrant workers and non-citizen immigrants to apply for food stamps and other USDA administered welfare benefits. Sessions wrote, “It defies rational thinking, for the United States – now dangerously \$16 trillion in debt – to partner with foreign governments to help us place more foreign nationals on American welfare and it is contrary to good immigration policy in the United States.”

“The revelation that the USDA is actively working with the Mexican government to promote food stamps for illegal aliens should have a direct impact on the fate of the immigration bill now being debated in Congress,” said Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton. “These disclosures further confirm the fact that the Obama administration cannot be trusted to protect our borders or enforce our immigration laws. And the coordination with a foreign government to attack the policies of an American state is contemptible.”

To view all the documents, click [here](#).