



## In Iowa's Interest:

### The Holidays Are a Time for Joy and Compassion

*by Senator Tom Harkin*

The Thanksgiving holiday is a wonderful chance to gather with family and friends, to enjoy a meal and each other's company, and to give thanks for the many blessings we enjoy. But each of us, in the privacy of our hearts, should find a time this holiday season to remember those who are struggling. The economic hardships of the past few years have taken a toll in our state, and the Department of Agriculture currently ranks 11.5 percent of Iowans as 'food insecure.'

Hunger in Iowa? In a state famously called 'the breadbasket of the world?' Shockingly, the answer is yes, and many of the hungry are single mothers and children. They skip healthy eating for cheaper, less nutritious alternatives, and many simply don't know when they'll get their next meal.

There are things each of us can do to give our fellow citizens some comfort and relief. The most pressing actions that Congress can take include renewing unemployment benefits, which are set to expire at the end of this month, and sending the child nutrition reauthorization, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, to the President for his signature. Together, these bills will help jobless Americans make ends meet and provide nutritious food to needy children.

And as we are working to increase food security, Congress also has an opportunity to ensure the safety of the food we eat by updating our 100-year-old plus food safety system and passing The FDA Food Safety Modernization Act. This legislation will place more emphasis on prevention of food borne illness and will provide new tools to respond to food safety problems.

We in Congress have to remember that the holidays are a season of joy, but they are also a season of compassion.

As private citizens, donating and volunteering are simple acts that can make quite a difference to the less fortunate. There's an old saying: "we make a living by what we make, but we make a life by what we give." If you are able, I encourage you to reach out to your local soup kitchen or food bank, or to contact the Community Action Agency for your area. A list of the agencies can be found at <http://www.iowacommunity-action.com/Agency/index.cfm>

Have a wonderful, healthy and safe Thanksgiving holiday.