The Right to Food: Harnessing a Human Rights Framework in Local and State Advocacy Efforts
• RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association urges governments to promote the human right to adequate food and nutrition for all through increased funding, development and implementation of strategies to prevent the infringement of that right.

• FURTHER RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association urges the United States government to make the realization of a human right to adequate food a principle objective of U.S. domestic policy.
Origin of Human Rights

"Where, after all do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home, so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination...." - Eleanor Roosevelt
Origins of the Human Right to Food

- **Roosevelt’s Economic Bill of Rights (1944 State of the Union)** - “Right to earn enough to provide adequate food.”

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)**
  - Article 25: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food . . .”

- **UN Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1977)**
  - Signed by President Carter; not ratified by US Senate

- **2008 – US votes against right to food resolution at UN (vote of 180-1).**
Elements of the Human Right to food

- Sufficient food is available
- People have the means to access it
- That it adequately meets the individual's dietary needs.

UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Human Rights Approach

- “Progressive realization”

- Fundamental rights -- regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender or national origin

- Those rights are manifested in policies and programs
Compliance with International Law

- Universal Periodic Review (next in 2015) – before Human Rights Council
  - Evaluation of US compliance with all HR standards, including Universal Declaration.
  - Results in Recommendations.
  - Advocacy: Civil society can submit reports; talk to diplomats from other countries; urge them to question US Government approach.

- Use Recommendations in U.S. advocacy efforts
Hunger and Poverty Today

- As of 2013, 14.5 percent of Americans were living in poverty; in 2012, 46.5 million Americans (15% of the population) were living in poverty including 16.1 million (or 21.8 percent of) children.

- Recent research indicates that nearly 40% of Americans between the ages of 25 and 60 will experience at least one year below the official poverty line during that period and 54% will spend a year in poverty or near poverty.
Beyond poverty, economic insecurity has increased steadily since 2007 for every major American demographic group, rising from 38% to 45% for Americans overall. The rate for women increased from 35% to 41%. If economic insecurity continues to rise at the average rate of increase, half of all Americans could lack security incomes in 2015.
Hunger and Poverty Today

- Food insecurity in the United States remains at record levels for the fifth year in a row, with 17.6 million households having difficulty feeding their families, and 7 million of these families suffering from "very low food security" that forced them to go hungry in 2012.
- 14.5 percent of all U.S. households—amounting to 49 million people—suffered food insecurity in 2012, with poor households, households with children headed by single women or single men, and African American and Hispanic households hardest hit.
Over the course of time federal, state, local and tribal governments have adopted more direct roles in addressing the problem of hunger, often through programs aimed at the root cause of poverty.

In this era of both soaring budget deficits and escalating poverty, there is a great need for the federal government to ensure it is spending its resources as wisely and effectively as possible on the needs of those Americans who require a helping hand during hard times.

SNAP as an entitlement as positive example[?]
What does ABA policy really mean?

- **Approved by ABA House of Delegates**
  - Introduced by an entity of the ABA (Commission, Section, etc.)
  - Voted on by elected leaders of state & local bars (560 persons)

- **ABA Governmental Affairs Office**
  - GAO = “eyes, ears, and voice” of the ABA
    - Coveys views of the bar
      - **Federal Level**: Congress, Agencies
      - **State Level Efforts**: Support ABA entities – local members; connect with State and Local Bars
How does this play out in real life?

- **Federal**: Letter writing/testifying-agency and leg. meetings
  - Positions developed from ABA Policy
  - Strategy developed by ABA members and allies

- **State**:
  - State and Local Bar Associations
    - Invaluable for political support
    - Legislators go to locals not ABA
    - State & Local Bars could pass their own policies
  - Local ABA Members
    - Help to implement policy with allies as part of work with ABA
Examples of ABA Role on State Strategy

- **Example 1: Reductions in funding for immigrant child representation (1 state)**
  - Direct input from ABA; coordination with bench and bar
  - Issue of direct impact to the legal profession

- **Example 2: Death Penalty Moratorium (national)**
  - Support from/Coordination with state and local bars
  - Convened Meetings
  - Key states approached – low hanging fruit and those that will get attention (leadership states)
  - ABA announcement
Using the Human Right to Food Policy in MD

- **Key:**
  - *This Policy is the Statement of the organized bar*

- **Uses**
  - Legislation
  - Agency Advocacy
  - People Power
    - ABA Commission on Homelessness & Poverty members
    - State and Local Bar support
    - ABA GAO opens doors
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