



How to Invite Legislators to Your Eat-In

Inviting your legislators to your Eat-In is the most effective way to show them that there's a movement for change in your community and that it's time to give kids real food at school.

Legislators love to make appearances at community events when they're home in their districts, and it's surprisingly easy to invite them. This year, Senators and Representatives are home in their districts for the entire month of August and the first week of September (through Labor Day), which is perfect timing for the National Eat-In. **Their schedule fills up quickly, though—so contact them soon.**

Start by calling your legislators' district office¹ and asking to speak with the scheduler. Tell the scheduler that you're a constituent (i.e. a voter in the legislator's district) and that you'd like to invite the legislator to participate in an event on Labor Day, Sept. 7. Ask the scheduler how he or she prefers to receive requests, e.g. by email, fax, post, etc. The scheduler will tell you how to proceed.

The next page of this PDF has a sample invitation letter you can send. After you make your first contact, follow up a few days later. Be friendly, and persistent.

If the legislator can't make it to your Eat-In, he or she may be able to send a staff member instead. Don't be disappointed: staff members inform their legislator about key issues, and often write legislation.

If the legislator can make it, assign someone on your organizing team to be the legislator's "handler" on the day of the Eat-In. Keep in mind that the legislator will almost certainly want to give a speech. Introduce the legislator in such a way that he or she has to respond to your agenda, e.g. "Senator So-and-So is here to tell us why it's time for lunch." Consider putting the words "It's time for lunch" or "One dollar for each child" on a big piece of paper and asking the legislator to sign it. For photos, make sure your legislator is standing in front of *Time for Lunch* banner. Remember that politicians *work for you*.

If you'd like to arrange for an in-person meeting instead of inviting the legislator to your Eat-In, refer to the [Community Food Security Coalition's Advocacy Handbook](#). You can also attend a legislator's Town Hall meeting and ask questions. Find the schedule on the legislator's web site or contact the district office.

¹ You can find your legislators' contact information by typing in your zip code on <http://congress.org>.



Sample Invitation Letter

[DATE]

The Honorable [NAME]

[ADDRESS]

Dear [NAME],

On behalf of [CHAPTER/ORGANIZATION NAME], I would like to invite you to participate in a public potluck on Monday, September 7 in [CITY/TOWN].

Our community is concerned about the food our children eat at school. In the midst of a national obesity epidemic, our schools struggle to serve anything but the fast food and junk food that endangers children's health. This year, with the Child Nutrition Act up for reauthorization, we have an opportunity to fix this problem. By giving schools the resources to serve real food, we can make a down payment on health care reform, we can build a strong foundation for our children's health and we can make sure that the legacy we're leaving them is a future filled with opportunity, security and success.

On September 7, [ORGANIZATION NAME] is organizing a public potluck (we call it an "Eat-In") to demonstrate that [CITY/TOWN] is ready to provide our children with real food at school. This event is just one of hundreds taking place across America as part of the Time for Lunch National Eat-In.

The potluck begins at [TIME] at [LOCATION] with [DESCRIPTION OF EVENT] sponsored by [NAMES, IF ANY]. Other community leaders and representatives of the media have also been invited to attend. I hope you will consider joining us on this important day.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

[ORGANIZATION(S) & CONTACT INFO]



KEY MESSAGES AND TALKING POINTS

Key messages

- We're calling for Congress to pass a Child Nutrition Act that **gives schools the resources to serve REAL FOOD for lunch.**
- On Labor Day, Sept. 7, people in communities all over the country are gathering for public potlucks that send a clear message to Congress: **It's time to provide our children with REAL FOOD at school.**
- It's time to invest in children's health, protect against food that puts children at risk and teach children healthy habits that will last through life.

Talking points

- By giving schools the resources to serve real food, we can build a strong foundation for our children's health.
- By teaching children healthy eating habits, we can make a down payment on health care reform.
- School cafeterias that purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables are economic engines for developing small businesses, supporting family farmers and creating jobs in our communities.
- **Real food is good at every link in the chain.** It tastes good, it's good for us, it's good for the people who grow it, it's good for our country and it's good for the planet.
- Our schools lack the resources to serve children the real food they need. To solve this problem, Congress must:
 - Invest in children's health. Give schools just one more dollar per day for each child.
 - Protect against food that puts children at risk. Establish strong standards for all food sold at school, including food from vending machines and school fast food.
 - Teach children healthy habits that will last through life. Fund grants to start innovative farm-to-school programs and school gardens.



- When children learn that real food is both delicious and good for them, they ask for it at school and at home. As Michelle Obama has said, “What I found with my kids [is that] if they were involved in planting and picking it, they were much more curious to give it a try.”
- On Labor Day, Sept. 7, 2009, people in communities across America will participate in a **National Eat-In** by sitting down to share a meal with their neighbors. This day of action will send a clear message to Congress: It’s time to provide our children with real food at school.