



Speaker Bios

Kevin W Concannon, Under Secretary USDA Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services

Kevin W. Concannon was nominated by President Obama and Secretary Vilsack and confirmed by the U.S. Senate in July 2009 to serve as Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services in the United States Department of Agriculture.

Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services has principal responsibilities and funding authority for Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), which feeds an estimated 25 percent of the U.S. population, and has lead responsibilities for promoting healthful diet through the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion.

Working in partnership with State and local organizations, FNS oversees the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, which serves over 43 million Americans each month; child nutrition programs including National School Lunch, School Breakfast, and Summer Food Service Programs; The Child and Adult Care Food Program; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); the Commodity Supplemental Food Program; Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations; The Emergency Food Assistance Program; and other nutrition programs.

Under Secretary Concannon has had a lengthy and distinguished career in public service. Over the past twenty-five years, he has served as Director of State Health and Human Services departments in Maine, Oregon, and Iowa. He has championed expanded services, improved access, alternatives to institutions, consumer choices, affordable health care, diversity in workplace and programs, and modernization of public information technology systems.

He has served in a number of national organizations, including serving as President of the American Public Welfare Association, President of the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, trustee of the American Public Human Services Association, board member of the American Humane Association, and co-chair of the Milbank Memorial Fund state steering committee.

He has received a number of awards, including the Lifetime Human Services Award from the American Public Human Services Association in 2007.

He is a native of Portland, Maine, a graduate of Saint Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia with both Bachelor of Arts and Master of Social Work degrees. He has continued his studies at the University of Southern Maine and the University of Connecticut Graduate School of Social Work.

Concannon has taught graduate courses at the University Connecticut, Portland State University, Oregon, and the University of Iowa as Adjunct Professor of Social Work.

Stacy Dean, Director of Food Assistance

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

As Director of Food Assistance Policy, Dean works extensively with program administrators, policymakers, and non-profit organizations to improve the food stamp program and provide eligible low-income families easier access to its benefits. She focuses on nutrition programs, immigrant issues, the federal budget, and cross program integration.

Dean started at the Center in April 1997 as a Senior Policy Analyst working on national policy issues such as the federal budget, the food stamp program, and benefits for immigrants. Before joining the Center, Dean worked as a budget analyst at the Office of Management and Budget where she worked on policy development, regulatory and legislative review, and budgetary process and execution for a wide variety of income support programs.

In 1999, Dean spent seven months in the United Kingdom as an Atlantic Fellow in Public Policy, examining the integration of benefit and tax policy for low-wage workers.

Dean received both her B.A. and Masters in Public Policy from the University of Michigan.

Terre Penn, Field Services Administrator

Department of Social and Health Services (Washington)

Terre Penn has over 30 years experience in the areas of information technology project management, call center design and implementation, strategic planning, and business process re-engineering in public assistance office operations.

Terre joined the Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) in 1995 as their Telecommunications Manager. She joined the DSHS Community Services Division (CSD) in 2000 to lead their call center and document imaging implementation efforts. Prior to 1995, Terre worked 14 years for Washington's Department of Information Services, the state's information technology agency.

Terre currently is in charge of Field Services for the DSHS Community Services Division. She was in charge of the Division's business process re-engineering project called Service Delivery Review (SDR). This project radically changed the Division's business model in order to meet the increased demand for services coupled with fewer resources. CSD has leveraged streamlined business processes, increased community access, and technology to meet the demand for services. The results have been dramatic: client wait times for interviews went from 3-4 weeks to 5-45 minutes; 90% of client applications are processed the same day; average days to process pending applications went from 14-18 days to 4-8 days; and accuracy and participation rates increased. Washington was also a 2010 finalist for the coveted American Business Award for their business re-engineering efforts.

Kenneth Hecht, Executive Director

California Food Policy Advocates

Kenneth Hecht is the executive director and one of the co-founders of California Food Policy Advocates. Upon completion of law school, Ken worked for fifteen years as a public interest attorney, first at San Francisco Neighborhood Legal Assistance Foundation and then as executive director of the San Francisco Legal Aid Society. At the Legal Aid Society, he played a leading role in establishing the Youth Law Center and the Employment Law Center, two specialized test case, law reform organizations.

John Wagner, Director
California Department of Social Services

John A. Wagner was appointed Director of the California Department of Social Services by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in April 2007. With nearly two decades of experience in human services, he has served as senior policymaker and advisor to six gubernatorial administrations in Wisconsin and Massachusetts.

Previous to his appointment, Dir. Wagner served as assistant secretary for children, youth and families for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, where he coordinated policies and programs for the Office of Children, Youth and Families with other state agencies. Director Wagner also served as commissioner for the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, where he led one of the state's largest agencies and oversaw the administration of cash assistance, shelter and food programs serving poor and low-income residents.

Director Wagner also served in the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, in a number of senior leadership positions including undersecretary of administration and human services.

Director Wagner earned a master's degree in public administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, a master's degree in public policy from Georgetown University and a bachelor's degree from Marquette University.

Julie Zaebst, Policy Center Manager
Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger

Julie Zaebst is the Policy Center Manager at the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger, which fights hunger in southeastern Pennsylvania through outreach, education and advocacy. For the past seven years, Julie has been an integral part of the Coalition's efforts to increase enrollment and retention in SNAP and to simplify program administration. She also leads the Coalition's research and policy initiatives in the areas of child nutrition and emergency food programs. Julie holds a Master of Social Service and Master of Law and Social Policy from Bryn Mawr College's Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research.

Elisa Zygmunt, Director of Projects and Analytics
Benefits Data Trust

Elisa Zygmunt is the Director of Projects and Analytics for Benefits Data Trust (BDT), a not-for-profit organization committed to assisting low-to-moderate income people gain access to benefits that they are eligible to receive. Since BDT was founded in 2005, Elisa has been actively engaged in the collaborative development and refinement of the outreach methodologies and technology that make the BDT model a success. Elisa also oversees all of the organization's current projects and works closely with government and community partners. Elisa has a Master of Social Work from the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice.