

Editorial

Inflation pressures us all, but it's grip is squeezing the poor

- [The Journal Gazette Editorial Board](#)



File

The shelves at food pantries such as Wellspring's aren't as well stocked today as they have been in recent years.

Rachel Von | The Journal Gazette

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen was grilled about inflation during a Senate Finance Committee hearing Tuesday. Yellen, an emeritus economics professor and former Federal Reserve chairman, had already been pilloried for stating she underestimated the extent to which price increases and supply-chain problems would disrupt the economy.

We're willing to bet those attending the hearing are more likely to ask themselves where they will eat than whether they can afford to eat.

In Allen County, more people than usual are struggling to find food.

Community Harvest Food Bank now serves about 750 families weekly – a 37% increase since the beginning of 2021.

Food insecurity is not as bad as it was at the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdowns when the food bank was seeing 1,200 or more families per week, Katie Savoie, Community Harvest's development director, told JG freelance reporter Lars Arwood.

In a story published in Sunday's Journal Gazette, Associated Churches, The Bethany Pantry and Butler United Methodist Food Pantry all reported an uptick in clients. Wayne Township Trustee Austin Knox said the township board has voted to increase food and gasoline vouchers.

And bad news begets even crueller news.

"Rising prices are also a challenge for the pantries, and donations have begun to dwindle," Arwood found. "Typically, food banks receive donations from sources including retailers such as Meijer and Walmart, local farms, individuals, businesses, churches and schools, usually through food drives."

Mel Ebers, who directs the Butler United Methodist Food Pantry, said she hasn't had any food donations in the past few months.

Inflation is affecting all Americans, but the pressure isn't equally distributed.

In April, median wages jumped 6% from a year earlier, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. It's the largest gain since 1990, which would be great news except that the inflation rate is 8.3%.

"Meanwhile, the poorest one-fifth of Americans have exhausted the savings they'd built up during the pandemic in part through stimulus checks, child tax credit payments and higher wages, according to calculations by Jeffries, an investment bank," the Associated Press reported Tuesday. "The other four-fifths of U.S. households are still sitting on a large stockpile of additional savings since the pandemic, with much of that held by the top fifth."

Even among the four-fifths with relatively healthy bank accounts, families with median house incomes of \$75,000 or less are adjusting their budgets, including cutting down on charitable donations. The stock market's bearishness could also force retrenchment among those on the upper end of the economic scale.

No law forces us to dig deeper and find ways to help our neighbors. But charity – particularly in the bleakest of times – is a concept that is part of our ethos tracing to childhood stories such as “Stone Soup.”

But this situation also calls for leaders to use their political capital. Last week, Gov. Eric Holcomb said he has a proposal to offer relief to Hoosiers. He didn't offer specifics. He has said he won't temporarily suspend the gas tax, a quick and affordable solution given the state's sizable surplus, projected to reach \$6 billion.

While politicians dither, we hope Hoosiers who can will dig a little deeper to help their neighbors. Our collective generosity is a big part of what makes us exceptional.