

970146

SUBJECT: FSP - Montana - Request to Extend Waiver 970146

TO: Allan C. Nickels, Regional Director
Food Stamp Program
Mountain Plains Region

This is in response to your memo forwarding the Montana State Agency's request to extend waiver number 970146 through February 1999. This waiver exempted individuals residing on seven Indian reservations from the time limits of Section 6(o) of the Food Stamp Act.

Individuals residing on Flathead reservation in portions of Lake and Missoula Counties and the Ft. Peck reservation received an exemption for a period of 6 months, ending August 31, 1998. Approval for the 6 month extension was based on the most recent available data (1995) from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) indicating employment-to-population ratios below the national average at that time of 64.1 percent. In our March 6, 1998, response we indicated that to receive another extension the State agency would be required to provide more recent data from BIA or other data that would support an extension. In its May 26, 1998, memo the State agency indicated that more recent data would not be available from BIA until late fall. It made no reference to other data that might support an exemption.

The BIA has advised us that the labor force data that it usually collects and publishes has been delayed. Therefore, we are approving the State agency's request to extend waiver number 970146 for Ft. Peck and portions of Flathead reservations through March 31, 1999, to correspond with the expiration date of the other reservations exempt under the same waiver.

If the State agency requests another extension it must provide data to support its request. We realize that the BIA data still may not be available. If so, the State agency must supply other data. For example, the unemployment rates for Ft. Peck reservation and for the portion of Flathead reservation located in Lake County are sufficiently high to suggest these counties might qualify for an exemption. The State agency could submit 24 months worth of civilian labor force, employment and unemployment data for Daniels, Roosevelt, Sheridan, Valley, and Lake Counties. We could then use this information to calculate unemployment rates based on census share data for the past 24 months and compare it to the national average.

We urge the State agency to work with the Bureau of Labor Statistics cooperating agency and the regional office to identify other data or sources of data to support an additional extension for these reservations. If you have any questions, please contact Moira Johnston of my staff at 703-305-2515.

Arthur T. Foley
Director
Program Development division

cc: Joe Pinto, John Knaus, Joe Shea, Maurice Tracy All Regions (except MPRO),
Civil Rights, CPB (circulate), Mike Depiro, OAE, Fran Heil

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