In Nevada, 1 in 5 people struggles with hunger. Members of The Council of State Governments gathered at the CSG 2017 National Conference Dec. 16 in Las Vegas to help address this need as part of the CSG Campaign Against Hunger initiative.

“The Campaign Against Hunger service project allows state leaders to come together as colleagues to work toward a common goal and give back to the communities in which we hold our meetings,” said David Adkins, CSG CEO/executive director.

Outreach Inc., in conjunction with CSG, organized attendees to package more than 35,000 meals to be donated to the Three Square food bank. Outreach is a nonprofit organization that works to provide safe water, food and medical care to those in need.

“There are a lot of people struggling with food insecurity in Nevada,” Ryan Widdis of Three Squares told attendees. “Your contribution today will help a lot of people.”

The pre-packaged meals assembled at Outreach’s events are particularly great for backpack meal programs, said Floyd Hammer, who founded Outreach with his wife Kathy Hamilton in 2004. Backpack meal programs send children in need of food assistance home from school on Fridays with meals for the weekend. Hammer said there is enough food in each of the 35,000 meals packaged to serve six people, so meals sent home through backpack programs are often able to feed whole families.

The CSG Campaign Against Hunger began as an initiative of Tennessee Senate Majority Leader Mark Norris, former chair of the CSG Southern Legislative Conference, who spearheaded food packaging events at SLC annual meetings. When Norris became CSG national chair in 2014, CSG adopted the tradition at national conferences. CSG members have packed more than 800,000 meals since the tradition began in 2011.