



Children's Defense Fund

A Comparison of the SNAP Provisions in the 2018 House and Senate Farm Bills

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The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, helps feed more than 40 million low-income Americans, including 19.9 million children—more than 1 in 4.ⁱ Every five years Congress must reauthorize the Farm Bill, which includes provisions related to agriculture, conservation and food, including SNAP that fall under the U.S Department of Agriculture's domain. SNAP prevents children and families from going hungry and improves their overall health. Research also shows children with access to food stamps are nearly 20 percent more likely to complete high school.ⁱⁱ SNAP is a very successful antipoverty program; lifting more than 1.5 million children out of poverty in 2016 – more than any other government program.ⁱⁱⁱ Two-thirds of SNAP funding goes directly to children and families.^{iv} Consequently, if Congress were to make any cuts to benefits or increase eligibility requirements, it would directly affect children whose families' health, stability and economic mobility rely on this vital nutritional assistance.

Despite the critical role SNAP plays in keeping food on tables across America, SNAP benefits are threatened as Congress works to pass a Farm Bill this year. On June 21, the U.S House of Representatives narrowly passed its version of the Farm Bill with only Republican support. The bill includes more than \$20 billion in SNAP benefit cuts over 10 years and imposes a harsher set of work requirements that threaten the food security of millions of families with dependents and older Americans. More than one million low-income households could lose their current level of benefits if its provisions become law.^v

In sharp contrast, the Senate passed its version of the 2018 Farm Bill on June 28 with substantial bipartisan support and the endorsements of many child and family advocacy groups including CDF. The Senate bill maintains SNAP's current benefit levels while reducing barriers to enrollment, strengthening employment opportunities for beneficiaries, and improving quality and integrity in the program's operations. The bill continues Congress' long history of working across party lines to seek improvements for this critical anti-hunger program.

The final version of the 2018 Farm Bill will now be decided by a conference committee composed of members from both houses who will meet to resolve the differences between the House and Senate bills.

CDF urges Congress to use the measures proposed by the Senate bill that protect and strengthen SNAP as the basis for the final 2018 Farm Bill. Policymakers must oppose the inclusion of any of the harmful House provisions that cut benefits, restrict eligibility or harshen work requirements.

Key Differences between the House and Senate Bills

While the House bill includes deep benefit cuts to SNAP and imposes a harsher set of work requirements that threaten the food security of millions of families, the Senate bill maintains SNAP's current benefit levels while reducing barriers to enrollment, strengthening employment opportunities for beneficiaries, and improving quality and integrity in the program's operations.

The House bill's expansion of the work requirement to families whose dependents are over age 6 and its restrictions on waiving the eligibility requirement and providing assistance to felons and individuals non-compliant with child support immediately threaten parents' ability to improve their economic situation and provide for their children. Additionally, beneficiaries' requirement to report their work hours monthly would be burdensome and likely result in benefits to be cut off as a result of non-compliant paperwork or processing errors because of the expanded bureaucracy the legislation requires. Those workers with fluctuating and inconsistent schedules would lose benefits when their work hours fall below 20 hours a week and families facing emergency financial crises could be barred from SNAP if they could not find work within a month of receiving benefits.^{vi} The House bill ignores the challenges low-wage workers face in finding steady employment to be able to fulfill their family-care needs.

In contrast, the Senate bill reauthorizes SNAP without adding harmful restrictions that limit eligibility. While it maintains the program's current work requirements already imposed on some SNAP beneficiaries, which are already challenging for many low-wage workers to meet, the bill provides state funding and flexibility to invest in employment and training to help counteract some current obstacles to employment and training opportunities. The bill improves several elements of SNAP including the reliability of the Electronic Benefit Transfer systems and quality control mechanisms. The bill also includes efforts to encourage the consumption of healthy foods as part of SNAP's goal to improve beneficiaries' health.

Help Protect and Strengthen SNAP

SNAP works and must be protected, but also strengthened. CDF does not support any provisions, such as those included in the House bill, that restrict eligibility or benefits. Rather, to increase the anti-poverty and anti-hunger impact of SNAP for families with children, increases to SNAP benefits are needed. SNAP is already a very lean program with the average recipient receiving only about \$1.40 per meal.^{vii} But increasing current SNAP benefits by 30 percent, as proposed in CDF's 2015 *Ending Childhood Poverty Now* report, could reduce child poverty 16 percent and lift 1.8 million additional children out of poverty.^{viii} While CDF will continue to advocate for larger-scale improvements to SNAP, Congress must first defend SNAP by adopting the Senate's final version of the 2018 Farm Bill.

**U.S. House of Representatives Farm Bill
The Agriculture & Nutrition Act of 2018
(H.R. 2)**

**U.S. Senate Farm Bill
Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018
(S.3042)**

Work Requirements

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imposes harsher work requirements than those currently in place in SNAP, requiring non-senior and non-disabled adult beneficiaries to work or be in a work program for at least 20 hours a week (increasing to 25 hours by 2026) with compliance assessed every <u>month</u>. • The 20 hours per week requirement would be for adults age <u>18-59 who do not have children under age 6</u>. • Individuals found to be non-compliant for more than a month would lose their SNAP benefits for <u>12 months</u> and then for <u>36 months</u> following each additional infraction. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not impose any additional work requirements on SNAP recipients, though maintains the work requirements already in place in SNAP while streamlining the provisions to improve implementation. As is currently required, most non-senior and non-disabled adults would be required to register for work and accept a job if offered with compliance assessed every <u>six months</u>. • The 20 hour per week requirement is only for adults age <u>18-49 who are not raising minor children</u>. • Adults working consistently less than 20 hours per week will receive benefits only for three out of every 36 months. • Individuals found to be non-compliant for more than three months can lose benefits for <u>one to three months</u> as a sanction but be re-enrolled immediately upon work compliance. |
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Employment & Training (E&T)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides \$7.3 billion over 10 years for the development of employment and training plans. • This funding would be highly inadequate for states to create the estimated 3.4 million jobs needed to support the increased work requirements and maintain the bureaucracy needed to monitor harsher work requirements.^{ix} | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifies the E&T requirements already in place by requiring E&T programs to consult and partner with local workforce entities and increase the number of opportunities that count for the work requirements. • Increases the SNAP E&T opportunities that qualify for the work requirements. • Provides additional funding for pilot programs that connect individuals with significant barriers to employment. |
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Eligibility and Benefits

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminates states' ability to increase the income eligibility threshold and waive asset tests for households reporting an income above the eligibility cutoff, but who have special circumstances that limit their ability to buy food (gross income eligibility limit could not be waived above 130% of poverty line). • Restricts food assistance for adults not cooperating with child support payments which as a result limits their ability to pay future child support. • Terminates food assistance for individuals convicted of certain violent crimes even if they are abiding by parole and reintegrating into the community. • Makes it more difficult for states to be approved for waivers to provide more households benefits during times of high unemployment and excludes cities from receiving these waivers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extends certification period for the elderly and disabled from two to three years to reduce participation barriers. • Strengthens the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations and reauthorizes. • Establishes the Harvesting Health Pilot Projects that provides a fruit and vegetable prescription program for low-income individuals at risk for diet-related health conditions. • Encourages retail grocery stores to incentivize the purchasing of healthy foods with SNAP benefits. |
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- ⁱ Executive Office of the President of the United States. 2015. “Long-Term Benefits of the Supplemental Assistance Program.” https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/files/documents/SNAP_report_final_nonembargo.pdf
- ⁱⁱ Executive Office of the President of the United States.
- ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. 2017. “2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplement,” Table A-7. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2017/demo/p60-261.html>
- ^{iv} United States Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy and Support. 2016. “Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Household: Fiscal Year 2015.” <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/Characteristics2015.pdf>
- ^v Bolen, Ed., Lexin Cai, Stacy Dean, Brynn Keith-Jennings, Catlin Nchaako, Dottie Rosenbaum and Elizabeth Wolkomir. Center on Budget and Policies. “House Farm Bill Would Increase Food Insecurity and Hardship.” <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/house-agriculture-committees-farm-bill-would-increase-food-insecurity-and>
- ^{vi} Bolen, Ed., Lexin Cai, Stacy Dean, Brynne Keith-Jennings, Caitlin Nchako, Dottie Rosenbaum and Elisabeth Wolkomir. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. 2018. “Senate Agriculture Committee’s Bipartisan Farm Bill Strengthens SNAP and Avoids Harming SNAP Households.” <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/senate-agriculture-committees-bipartisan-farm-bill-strengthens-snap-and>
- ^{vii} Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. 2018. “Policy Basics: The Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP).” <https://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basics-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>
- ^{viii} The Children’s Defense Fund. 2015. “Ending Child Poverty Now.” <http://www.childrensdefense.org/library/PovertyReport/EndingChildPovertyNow.html>