

By the Numbers: Senate Republican Leadership's Reconciliation Bill Takes Food Assistance Away From Millions of People



The Senate Republican leadership's reconciliation bill would dramatically raise costs and reduce food assistance for millions of people by cutting federal funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by [\\$186 billion through 2034, according to the Congressional Budget Office \(CBO\), about 20 percent](#) — the largest cut to SNAP in history. These cuts would increase poverty, food insecurity, and hunger, including among children. The so-called “Big Beautiful Bill” is anything but beautiful; it would cause widespread harm by making massive cuts to Medicaid and SNAP, which would raise costs on families and make it much harder for them to afford the high cost of health care and groceries.

Here are some of the impacts on food assistance:

- Cuts to SNAP in the Senate Republican leaders' reconciliation bill would affect all of the more than 40 million people who receive basic food assistance through SNAP, including some 16 million children, 8 million seniors, and 4 million non-elderly adults with disabilities, all of whom would be affected by the cuts in the bill.
- Despite some differences around the edges, and after the slight revisions Senate Agriculture Committee Chair John Boozman made to comply with the Senate parliamentarian's rulings, the Senate proposal mirrors virtually all of the misguided priorities and harmful impacts of the House bill: millions of people, including children, seniors, veterans, and individuals with disabilities [would see the food assistance they need to afford groceries terminated or cut substantially](#).
- And, the Senate bill adds \$66 billion in new spending for farm programs — \$9 billion more than the House bill — paid for by taking more food assistance away from people with low incomes.

Cuts Federal Funding, Shifts Costs to States

The Senate proposal, like the House bill, includes a major structural change that would cut billions in [federal funding for most states' basic food benefits](#) and then require those states to backfill for the federal cut.

- Most states would be required to pay 5 to 15 percent of food benefits. If a state can't make up for these massive federal cuts with tax increases or spending cuts elsewhere in its budget, it would have to cut its SNAP program (such as by restricting eligibility or making it harder for people to enroll) or it could *opt out of the program altogether*, terminating food assistance entirely in the state.

This would be the first time in the modern history of SNAP that the federal government would no longer ensure that the lowest-income families with children, older adults, and people with disabilities in every state have access to the food assistance they need. (Details and data on how much each state could be required to pay can be found [here](#).)

- Children who receive SNAP are automatically eligible for free school meals and summer EBT, and many would see cuts in these benefits as a result of losing the automatic eligibility that comes from receiving SNAP.
- The cuts to SNAP and child nutrition benefits could be far larger if more states deeply cut or terminate SNAP because of the cost shift. The risk of such cuts would rise during recessions, when state budgets are even more stretched.

Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Boozman made only minor changes to this provision to rectify the Senate parliamentarian's ruling that the original version did not meet the criteria allowing legislation to pass the Senate by a simple majority vote. These changes do not undo the harm that this provision would cause for low-income households and state budgets.

Takes Food Assistance Away by Expanding Work Requirement

More than 5 million people — about 1 in 8 SNAP participants — including 800,000 children and over half a million adults who are aged 65 or older or have a disability, live in a household that would be *at risk* of losing at least some of their food assistance because someone in their household is subject to the significant expansion of SNAP's already harsh, ineffective, and red tape-laden work requirement under the Senate proposal.

CBO has [indicated](#) that more than 2 million people in total would be cut from SNAP under the provision in a typical month, including 1.1 million people who live where jobs are scarce; 900,000 adults aged 55-64; 270,000 veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and former foster youth; and hundreds of thousands of parents of children. Expanding the work requirement would cut SNAP by about \$69 billion through 2034, CBO estimates.

- Under current SNAP rules, most non-elderly, non-disabled adults without children in their homes can't receive benefits for more than three months out of every three years if they don't document they are working at least 20 hours per week or prove they qualify for an exemption. The Senate Republican proposal would expand this restriction to older adults aged 55-64 and to parents whose youngest child is at least 14 years old, while also significantly limiting waivers for areas with poor economic conditions. The earlier version of the Senate plan applied to adults in households with children as young as 10.
- About 900,000 parents and other caregivers would be at risk of losing SNAP, putting the 800,000 children aged 14 to 17 who live with them at risk of receiving much less food assistance. While the maximum age of dependent children to qualify for an exemption is even lower in the House bill (age 6 versus 13 in the Senate), the Senate bill would still put nearly a million school-aged children at risk of hunger and food insecurity. (See state data on the number of people at risk [here](#).)
- The Senate proposal also would strip current exemptions from the work requirement for veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and former foster youth that under the House bill would remain in effect through fiscal year 2030.
- [Evidence](#) shows that these work requirements do little to nothing to improve employment outcomes and instead result in many people who already work or who should be exempt losing food assistance due to red tape.

Takes Food Assistance Away From Many Immigrants Living Lawfully in the U.S.

The proposal, like the House bill, would also **deny food assistance to many people who are immigrants living lawfully in the U.S. who have been granted humanitarian protections by the U.S. government.**

- Those affected would include refugees, people granted asylum, certain survivors of domestic violence and certain victims of sex or labor trafficking. See state data [here](#). (People who lack documentation already are ineligible for SNAP.)
- The Senate parliamentarian ruled that the original Senate provision did not meet the criteria that allow for legislation to be included in a reconciliation bill. To address this issue the Senate Agriculture Committee modified the provision to continue to allow people granted Cuban or Haitian entrant status to qualify for SNAP. CBO estimated that the original provision would take food assistance away from between 120,000 and 250,000 people living lawfully in the U.S.. CBO's revised [cost estimate](#) suggests about half as many people would lose food assistance under the most recent provision.

Cuts the Amount of Food Benefits Low-Income Families Receive

- The Senate proposal, like the House bill, would **cut food benefits by an average of \$100 per month for about 600,000 low-income households** by eliminating an administrative simplification for calculating utility expenses for many households. We estimate that more than 500,000 children live in these households.
- Over time, the bill would also, like the House bill, **cut food assistance benefits for all 40 million participants, including 1 in 5 children** in the U.S., and make SNAP benefits increasingly inadequate to afford a healthy diet by restricting future updates to the Thrifty Food Plan, the basis for SNAP benefits.

Increases Child Poverty and Hardship

- Based on CBO estimates, we estimate that about **1 million children would see food assistance to their families cut substantially or terminated** under the Senate proposal's expanded work requirement, elimination of eligibility for many lawfully present immigrants, and other benefit cuts.
- In addition, the bill puts **all children at risk of losing some or all of their benefits** based on how states react to the deep cut in federal funding and the requirement to either backfill for those cuts, cut their program to reduce state costs, or terminate their program entirely. And all children in the program would see their benefits cut over time as a result of the cut to the Thrifty Food Plan.
- By slashing federal funding and requiring states to pay a share of benefits, the bill paves the way for states to restrict eligibility, which could cut millions of working families with children off from SNAP entirely.
- Even when a family continues to receive SNAP, the cuts could be very large. For example, a mother with one child whose benefits get cut due to the work requirement would see the family's food assistance fall from a maximum of \$536 per month to \$292 per month — a loss of \$244 and not nearly enough to afford food for two people. This would cut their benefit to \$4.87 per person per day. (These are benefit figures for 2025.)
- **The bill walks away from a 50-year commitment** to ensure that low-income children in every community — in rural Alabama, in North Dakota, and in New York City — have access to the food assistance they need to grow and thrive.

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