The 1996 welfare law limits most working-age adults not raising minor children to three months of SNAP out of every 36 months unless they are working at least 20 hours a week or otherwise exempt. It also allows states to seek waivers from the time limit for higher-unemployment areas. Criteria for the waivers haven’t changed since they were set in 1999. Every state but Delaware has sought a waiver at some point, which allows them to protect poor unemployed people in areas with insufficient jobs.

Areas waived in FY 2017
States had waivers for counties, cities, or reservations representing 36 percent of the U.S. population.

Note: These maps show county waiver status for the majority of the year to the extent records are available. Many state waivers have not been on the fiscal year cycle, and states have often had multiple waivers in a given fiscal year.

Source: CBPP analysis of state waivers