



Our Public Policy Priority:

Maintain SNAP (formerly called Food Stamps) without New Barriers

In short: The proposed rules would impose unnecessary and harmful restriction on states and on people struggling with unemployment and underemployment.

The problem of hunger is real.

Nationally, 42 million people have trouble getting enough food to eat. In the communities served by the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, the total is about 132,000. Those are big numbers, and they have come down only slightly since the peak of the recession several years ago.

Why are so many people struggling with hunger when unemployment is low and the economy is steadily improving? The primary reason is that more people than ever are working part-time rather than full time or are otherwise earning less money than they were before the financial crisis... while their spending for housing, health care and other basic needs has increased. And, the number of seniors who are living on meager fixed incomes and don't have enough food to eat is growing rapidly. In fact, the number of seniors struggling with hunger is expected to grow to more than 8 million by 2050.

We believe the solution is for government and charities to continue to work together and to make sure SNAP is there for people who really need it.

Fortunately, our nation has a food assistance system — a public-private partnership — that works really well, and it's funded mostly through the Farm Bill, the major agriculture and food legislation that is reviewed and funded every five years in Congress.

Food banks across the country do a lot for people who don't have enough to eat. Locally, the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank distributes enough food for about 21 million meals each year. Nationally, food banks provide some 40 million Americans with enough food for 4.5 billion meals.

In comparison, *SNAP provides hungry Americans with 12 times as much food.* And the error rate with SNAP is less than 3%, which means that nearly all the people who are receiving the assistance truly need it.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is considering a new rule that would make it much more difficult for able-bodied adults without dependents to receive SNAP. Such persons are already limited to receiving SNAP for a maximum of three months over a period of three years.

States currently have the ability to waive those limits in areas with high unemployment. But the USDA's proposal would drastically limit the state's ability to enact those waivers, with the result of cutting SNAP for people who really need it — people like veterans with PTSD or others with mental illness who are unable to keep a job and having difficulty managing their lives. People like single moms who must care for preschoolers or aging parents. People without the skills to keep a job that offers them at least 20 hours a week.

No one becomes a better person, a better parent, a better employee or a better citizen on an empty stomach. **Food comes first.** Food banks are doing their part, and the federal government must do its part. No one gains anything when our neighbors go hungry.

Congress passed the Farm Bill in December 2018, authorizing spending on SNAP for the next five years without these changes, and the President signed the bill. Please join us and tell the USDA to keep SNAP intact as our elected officials intended it to be.

The USDA is collecting public comment through April 2, 2019.

Email Nicole Budzius, Chief, Retailer Administrative Branch, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, at RPMDHQ-WEB@fns.usda.gov.