



USDA Will Tighten Requirements for SNAP; Some States Are Suing

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A new Trump administration rule change, set to go into effect in April, will result in nearly 700,000 people across the country being dropped from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), commonly known as “food stamps.”



In December 2019, the Trump administration said it would limit states’ ability to issue eligibility waivers to single able-bodied adults between the ages of 18 and 49.

A January 26 *New York Times* report noted that the Trump administration sees record low unemployment and steady economic growth as making this an opportune time to nudge people off the SNAP federal assistance program.

“Millions and millions of people don’t need food stamps anymore,” the report quoted President Trump’s statement at last week’s World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. “They have jobs. They’re doing really well.”

A January 27 report from Kaiser Health News carried an ominous headline: “Anti-Poverty Advocates, Food Stamp Beneficiaries, Local Officials Brace For SNAP Cuts.” That report cited the *Times*’ article from the previous day, which focused on the implications of the pending change in Cuyahoga County, Ohio (Cleveland). The *Times* report stated:

Next month, Cuyahoga County, Ohio’s second largest, will begin sending letters and fliers, making phone calls and hosting information fairs to alert struggling citizens of a change about to befall them: Come April, able-bodied adults without children may lose their food stamps if they do not find work fast.

The report noted that 3,000 recipients will be dropped from the food-stamp rolls in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.

“That’s a fairly big hit for the county, for our population,” the report quoted Kevin Gowan, the administrator of Cuyahoga Job and Family Services, which oversees the SNAP Program. “We’re not happy to do it. It is our job and we will fulfill our job.”

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Some states have taken to suing the USDA over the new changes. A January 18 report from Capital Public Radio in Sacramento said that 14 states, including California, filed suit on January 16 against the Trump administration to block the rule that would eliminate food stamps for those who did not meet the new work requirements.



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on January 27, 2020

That report noted that under current federal law, able-bodied adults under the age of 50 with no dependent children must either be working at least 20 hours a week or in vocational training to get food stamps consistently. Otherwise, they can only receive three months of the benefit every three years. However, up until now, states and counties have been able to waive those requirements by demonstrating that the local labor market made it hard for people to find jobs. All but six California counties have waivers.

The new federal rule will make that waiver much more difficult to obtain in most of the state.

There is no authorization in the Constitution for the federal government to appropriate a single cent for programs such as SNAP, but once people become dependent on them, cutting all recipients off in one fell swoop may indeed be traumatic for many. However, the Trump administration's proposal will reduce the program gradually, and is a fairly humane step in the right direction.

Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at wmass@thenewamerican.com

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