



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on August 12, 2011

Michigan Tosses 30,000 College Students Off Food Stamps

No longer. [The Detroit News reported](#) on Monday that Human Service Director [Maura Corrigan](#) has tossed 30,000 college students off the food dole, which will save the state \$75 million annually.

Naturally, food stamp devotees want as many college students on the program as possible. But almost everyone, including Kwame Kilpatrick, the former Mayor of Detroit, knows that using food stamps while in college is a scam on the taxpayers.

Low Estimate

[According to](#) the *News*, officials initially had greatly underestimated how many students were involved: "The number of students taken off food stamps was close to double the estimate of 10,000 to 18,000 before the policy change was implemented in April."

And it's no wonder so many thought robbing the taxpayers was acceptable. Some schools, such as Central Michigan University, advertised the program on their websites, Corrigan says. Naturally, the *News* reported, a Central Michigan University school official denied it. "I am confident," [he told](#) the paper, "no official CMU site would promote this kind of activity."

Whatever CMU did, students could avail themselves of food stamps, which are no longer issued as "stamps" but instead as "Bridge" (debit) cards, because Michigan made an exception to federal rules that prohibit able-bodied college students from receiving the debit cards. That exception allowed "those participating in a valid employment and training program" to receive food stamps. Because "employment training was defined as attending college," [the News reported](#), quoting Corrigan's spokesman, college students quickly swarmed the food stamp offices.

Corrigan told the newspaper that one large Michigan school, which she did not identify, had 3,500 students on the program.

For and Against

"Maybe [students] could go get a part-time job — that's what I did," [Corrigan told](#) the *News*. "We want to encourage people to be self-sufficient, not to be dependent on the government."

That's just too much to ask, one student told the *News*. Kayla Neff, the paper reported, "a 19-year-old Spanish and computer science student at Central Michigan University who qualified for food stamps in September, said it's tough to find a job in Michigan, particularly for students with little experience."

Neff said she and her father share about \$150 a month in grocery money from the program, which "made all the difference in the world," but her eligibility is now under review.

"Students should be focusing on their education, not whether or not they'll be able to eat dinner





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or whether they can manage to find a job and balance it on top of their studies,” Neff said in a Friday email interview from Mount Pleasant.

Another supporter of the status quo is Nate Smith-Tyge, director of the Michigan State University Food Bank, who told the *News*, “The stereotypical profile of the middle-class freshman getting dropped off at the new dorm room by Mom and Dad no longer applies.” He added,

A more nuanced approach would have been more humane. This sort of carte blanche decision is going to adversely affect people who really needed it. At what cost does it eliminate some abuse?

The abuse was rampant and didn’t include just college students. [Officials said](#) that enrollees’ assets would count in application for food stamps after officials learned that a lottery millionaire was collecting food stamps, the *News* reported. The paper said Leroy Fick “remained eligible for food stamps and continued using them after he won \$2 million in the state lottery TV show *Make Me Rich!* in June 2010.”

But Fick’s theft from the taxpayers was only possible because of the Obama administration, which eliminated mean-testing to cut down on paperwork.

As [James Bovard reported](#) in the *Wall Street Journal* in June, “Millionaires are now legally entitled to collect food stamps as long as they have little or no monthly income.” He continued,

Thirty-five states have abolished asset tests for most food-stamp recipients. These and similar “paperwork reduction” reforms advocated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) are turning the food-stamp program into a magnet for abuses and absurdities.

Scam

At least one former college student has said that using food stamps is a scam. That would be [Kwame Kilpatrick](#) — the former Mayor of Detroit imprisoned for corruption and now awaiting trial on 38 new felony charges — who wrote about it in his [new book](#), *Surrendered: The Rise, Fall & Revelation of Kwame Kilpatrick*.

Kilpatrick “revealed he used food stamps when he attended Florida A&M University in the late 1980s and early 1990s,” the [News reported](#). At the time, his mother was a state representative and his father was a top Wayne County official. In his book, Kilpatrick observed,

The food stamp game is an old hook-up in neighborhoods from Detroit to Tallahassee. If you could get them, especially as a struggling college student, then you did.

So now, thanks to Corrigan, Michigan will no longer pass out debit cards loaded with money simply for the asking. And beginning October 1, millionaires won’t receive food stamps.

[Corrigan’s spokesman told](#) the *News*: “We’re going to take a look at everyone in the system.”



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