



Newsweek Says Cutting SNAP Will Leave Millions Without Food

The House passed a \$4.1 trillion budget resolution on October 12, by a narrow 219-206 vote. Eighteen Republicans voted with Democrats against the budget, including several from high-tax states such as New York and New Jersey who are concerned that the upcoming tax effort would repeal the deductions for state and local taxes.

CNBC reported that the Senate Budget Committee was expected to pass a similar budget, with a vote in the full Senate slated for the week of October 16.

That report observed that by passing a budget resolution through both GOP-controlled chambers, Republicans would trigger a legislative process known as reconciliation. Under that process, they could pass a tax reform bill with a simple majority of 51 votes in the Senate, instead of the usual 60-vote requirement.

An October 7 article posted by *Newsweek* predicted ominous consequences stemming from the budget's \$150 billion cut from several "poverty" programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps. The article predicted that the new budget, if passed, "will push millions of already struggling people off food stamps, leaving the neediest Americans — children and the elderly among them — without food."

Newsweek did not provide any documentation to prove this dire assertion, but it did interview several people who had experienced difficulty either in remaining eligible for the SNAP program as their finances changed or found the application process too complicated to complete.

Though SNAP is a federal program, because the states are responsible for distributing the funds, each state sets its own eligibility requirements, which are not uniform. *Newsweek* offered Alabama as an example of one state where the number of able-bodied people on SNAP has dropped from around 5,000 to 800. The article explained this was "because of the regulations states are forced to place on the benefits so that they can make their budget, a trend that's seen all over the U.S."

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The article noted that Californians have concerns that people who need programs such as SNAP won't be able to access them under Trump's new budget, and quoted Jared Call from California Food Policy Advocates. "We try to think of people first, but this particular [budget proposal] would really seek to shift a substantial share to the states or propose penalties to put states on the hook and that's just not something that state budgets are prepared to absorb," Call told *Newsweek*.

"California would go down \$1.8 billion to just keep even. So you're faced with cutting other important services or education or other programs or cutting benefit amounts or cutting eligibility," Call said. "We





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want SNAP to go to the people who need it, but this proposal does not work that way. There is no way to cut SNAP without impacting benefit levels or eligibility. Ninety-four percent of these funds go directly to benefits; there's no fat to cut."

Since California is evidently having budget problems making it difficult to finance its SNAP program, one would think a good place to trim the budget would be to eliminate the children of illegal immigrants from the program. An article in the *Daily Caller* in September 2013 noted that Los Angeles County officials believed that by the end of 2013 illegal immigrant parents will have received \$650 million in welfare benefits for their native-born children, according to a CBS Los Angeles report.

The New American noted earlier this year that while "illegal aliens are not eligible to receive food stamps ... their children are, so illegals can apply for benefits for their children who automatically qualify regardless of how they came to the United States."

California has the largest number of illegal immigrants in the United States, with an estimated 2.4 million unauthorized immigrants making up about 6.3 percent of the state's total population. If each illegal alien has just two children, that means that there would be five million of them who are eligible for food stamps.

As infuriating as the idea of providing federal taxpayer dollars to families who are in this nation illegally may be, from a constitutional standpoint it makes little difference if the recipients of SNAP benefits are here legally or not. The simple fact is, neither SNAP nor any other federal welfare programs are authorized by the Constitution.

Our first guide is to consider the wording of the 10th Amendment, which reads: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." In other words, the federal government possesses only those powers delegated to it by the U.S. Constitution. All remaining powers are reserved for the states or the people.

We can read the Constitution from beginning to end and will find no authorization for the federal government to provide monetary assistance of any kind to the states. (Although, since Congress has power to exercise legislation over the District of Columbia, that legislation might conceivably include welfare benefits for district residents.)

Since the Constitution reserves all remaining powers to the states or the people, if the people of a state empower their state or local government to provide social-welfare programs, then that would be their prerogative. However, unlike the present SNAP program, where states distribute funding provided by Congress, these programs could not receive one cent of funding from Washington.

This principle is illustrated very well in a story about the famed American frontiersman, congressman, and Alamo defender Davy Crockett that was published in *Harper's Magazine* in 1867, and has been made into a video entitled [Not Yours to Give](#), produced by the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE).

The essence of this lesson in constitutionality is found in a statement that Crockett made on the floor of Congress:

I will not go into an argument to prove that Congress has no power to appropriate this money as an act of charity. Every member upon this floor knows it. We have the right, as individuals, to give away as much of our own money as we please in charity; but as members of Congress we have no



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right so to appropriate a dollar of the public money.

Crockett took the position he did because a constituent of his had reminded him of a very important point:

Congress has no right to give charity. Individual members may give as much of their own money as they please, but they have no right to touch a dollar of the public money for that purpose....

The people have delegated to Congress, by the Constitution, the power to do certain things. To do these, it is authorized to collect and pay moneys, and for nothing else. Everything beyond this is usurpation, and a violation of the Constitution.

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