



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on September 24, 2012

Obama Rule Doubled Number of Able-Bodied on Food Stamps

Republicans and conservatives [have charged](#) that President Obama wants as many Americans on the dole as possible. Now, some new numbers have surfaced that offer proof for these accusations.

The [Congressional Research Service has reported](#) that the number of able-bodied American adults on food stamps doubled after President Obama relaxed eligibility requirements to participate in the [Supplemental Assistance Nutrition Program](#) (SNAP), commonly known as “food stamps.”



So aside from “gutting” welfare reform, as Rep. Eric Cantor (R-Va.) has stated, [by eliminating work requirements](#) to get temporary assistance, Obama has told Americans who are capable of working that they can get free food.

What Obama Did

[Philip Klein](#), an editorialist for the *Washington Examiner*, explained,

In addition to the broader work requirement that has become a contentious issue in the presidential race, the 1996 welfare reform law included a separate rule encouraging able-bodied adults without dependents to work by limiting the amount of time they could receive food stamps.

This is the rule which Obama changed, Klein continued:

Under the rule adopted in 1996, food stamps for able-bodied adults without dependents were limited to three months in a 36-month period unless the participant in the program “works at least 20 hours a week; participates in an employment and training program for at least 20 hours per week; or participates in a (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) ‘workfare’ program for at least 20 hours per week.”

Obama’s economic stimulus legislation suspended the rule for all states starting April 2009.

Unsurprisingly, Klein said, once the able-bodied found out they could go grocery shopping for free, they lined up for food stamps in droves. He wrote,

Though the weakening of the economy would have led to an increase in food stamp usage with or without a waiver, the doubling of the use of food stamps by the able-bodied population without dependents exceeded the 43 percent increase in food stamp usage among the broader population over the same 2008 to 2010 time frame.

This gives more weight to the idea that the waiver fueled the food stamp growth among the population it affected, beyond where it would have been even in a weak economy.

The Numbers



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The [CRS report](#) is a short one, released by [House Majority Leader Eric Cantor](#) (R-Va.). It explains the result of Obama's new policy on those known in federal lingo as 'able-bodied adults without dependents,' or ABAWDs.

Because of the welfare reform of 1996, which tied receiving federal welfare and food stamps to finding work, "states have the option, but are not required, to offer ABAWDs a slot in an employment and training program or a workfare program," according to the CRS report.

States can receive more federal largesse to help with such programs, [CRS explained](#), but "if a state does not offer an ABAWD a slot in an employment and training or workfare program, benefits can be terminated for those without at least a half time job once the 3-month limit is reached, unless the individual is covered by an exemption or a 'waiver.'"

In other words, to get help a person had to work. The rules further state that ABAWDs who don't work at least 20 hours per week, or receive valid job training, are limited to receiving food stamps for a maximum of six months every three years.

Obama changed all that with the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009](#), his ballyhooed "stimulus." It "suspended the ABAWD time limits for those who do not work at least 20 hours per week in a job," [CRS reported](#). "This suspension covered the period April 2009 through September 30, 2010."

Unsurprisingly, again, people lined up in droves, skipping the work requirement to get free food. The number of ABAWDs receiving food stamps rocketed from 1.906 million to 3.869 million between the end of 2008 and end of 2010, an increase of 102 percent. Before Obama relaxed eligibility rules, 6.6 percent of food stamps recipients were ABAWDs. By 2010, 9.7 percent were.

Figures for 2011 and 2012 are not yet available, [Klein reported](#).

The number of ABAWDs on food stamps has increased 53.4 percent, [CRS reported](#), from 2007 through 2010, and about 12 percent from 2007 through 2008.

Cantor explained that Obama's policies aren't doing much to improve life for ordinary Americans, unless turning them into wards of the state is considered an improvement. "This report once again confirms that President Obama has severely gutted the welfare work requirements that Americans have overwhelmingly supported since President Clinton signed them into law," [Cantor told](#) Klein by email. "It's time to reinstate these common-sense measures, and focus on creating job growth for those in need."

Other Food-Stamp Moves

The small change that boosted the number of food stamp recipients isn't this administration's only move to increase the number of Americans literally eating on the taxpayers' dime.

As [The New American reported](#) in early August, Obama also eased the income limits that affect eligibility for food stamps. The [GAO revealed](#) that some three percent of those receiving food stamps wouldn't be getting them but for the changes the president made to the eligibility rules. That cost the taxpayers an extra \$460 million in fiscal 2010, with GAO estimating that "2.6 percent (473,000) of households that received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits would not have been eligible for the program without broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) because their incomes were over the federal SNAP eligibility limits."

Additionally, administration officials [began running](#) advertisements urging Americans to sign up for food stamps, and the government even [enlisted the aid](#) of Mexican officials to publicize food stamps among



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Mexicans living in the United States. "Mexico will help disseminate this information through its embassy and network of approximately 50 consular offices," the program website says. That program [came from](#) President George W. Bush.

The Food-Stamp President and More

These data, along with the shocking truth that nearly 47 million Americans, more than 15 percent of the population, [receive food stamps](#), prompted failed GOP presidential candidate Newt Gingrich [to call Obama](#) the nation's "most successful food stamp president in American history."

But beyond the figures on food stamps, other statistics show just how many Americans expect a government handout. In February, the [Heritage Foundation reported](#) that 20 percent of Americans, which the foundation puts at 67 million, received some kind of federal subsidy.

[Concluded Heritage,](#)

The federal government spent more taxpayer dollars than ever before in 2011 to subsidize Americans.... 70 percent of the federal government's budget goes to individual assistance programs, up dramatically in just the past few years.

And, as Heritage noted, too many Americans pay no federal income tax:

The percentage of people who do not pay federal income taxes, and who are not claimed as dependents by someone who does pay them, jumped from 14.8 percent in 1984 to 49.5 percent in 2009. This means that in 1984, 34.8 million tax filers paid no taxes; in 2009, 151.7 million paid nothing.



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