

A cost-neutral update to the Thrifty Food Plan is a \$30 billion cut over 10 years.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the cornerstone of the nation's nutrition and food security safety net, helping to put food on the table for over 41 million participants each month. Food insecurity decreased between 2019 and 2021 due to government investments in SNAP. However, once those temporary benefit boosts ended, food insecurity increased, and now it is higher than pre-pandemic levels.

SNAP Action Needed

Congress must protect the Thrifty Food Plan and other SNAP provisions from any cuts.

Thrifty Food Plan

The Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), created in 1975, is the least expensive of four U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plans representing the weekly cost of buying food to maintain a healthy diet. This plan determines the maximum SNAP monthly benefit based on:

- current dietary guidelines,
- food consumption data, and
- cost of food items at retailers.

Evaluating the Thrifty Food Plan without adjusting the SNAP benefit ignores the reality of market rates and evolving dietary guidelines.

The bipartisan 2018 Farm Bill directed USDA to update the Thrifty Food Plan. The resulting update in 2021 was the first in 49 years to include a necessary and long overdue increase in SNAP benefits. This update modernizes the Thrifty Food Plan formula by aligning it with current

nutritional guidelines and looking at not only what is available on the market, but what people are buying as well. The benefit increase averages out to a modest \$1.19 per person per day.

Protect the Thrifty Food Plan from cuts in the 2024 Farm Bill. The last Farm Bill created a necessary pathway to update the Thrifty Food Plan every five years. This will align current dietary guidelines and food prices with the SNAP benefit amount. The regular adjustments also mean a smaller fiscal impact, while waiting several decades for the next adjustment would guarantee a higher fiscal impact and SNAP participants losing purchasing power.

Other Priority Legislation

Congress has previously shown that it has the power and ability to reduce food insecurity and poverty. Congress should continue the trend by following evidence-backed measures that would improve food security by adopting the following bills:

H.R. 3037/S. 1336 — Closing the Meal Gap Act

- Boosts SNAP benefit allotments through the more adequate Low-Cost Food Plan.
- Boosts SNAP benefits for families with children forced to choose between food and shelter.
- Boosts SNAP benefits for older Americans forced to choose between food and medicine.
- Boosts the SNAP minimum monthly benefit, which currently is only \$23.

Note: The Thrifty Food Plan update differs from the annual Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA). SNAP benefits receive a COLA increase annually. This only takes into account inflation based on the Consumer Price Index. COLAs do not respond to changes in nutrition science, consumer behavior, and new nutrient-dense food and beverage products on the market that may help individuals achieve a balanced diet.

H.R. 1510/S. 2435 — Improving Access to Nutrition Act

Ends SNAP's arbitrary three-month time limit for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) to ensure that all eligible people have access to nutrition assistance and stay healthy.

H.R. 3183/S. 1488 — Enhance Access to SNAP Act

- Eliminates barriers that college students face when accessing SNAP.
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H.R. 3519/S. 2258 — Hot Foods Act

- Allows hot prepared foods, like rotisserie chickens, from authorized SNAP retailers to be purchased with SNAP.
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H.R. 4170/S. 2038 — The Lift the Bar Act

- Ends the five-year bar (i.e., waiting period) for legal permanent immigrants to access SNAP and other federal programs.
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H.R. 3479 /S. 1753 — Restore Act

- Lifts the lifetime ban on SNAP participation for those with a drug felony conviction.
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H.R. 1763/S. 497 — Military Family Nutrition Access Act of 2023

- Excludes military housing allowances from income when determining eligibility for SNAP.
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Expand Incentives for Produce Purchases

- Increases funding for and expands the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (also known as GusNIP) to incentivize families purchasing more fruits and vegetables.
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Ensuring Equitable Food Access

- Improves SNAP access for Tribal populations, including by allowing participation in both SNAP and Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.
 - Extends pathway for SNAP to Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.
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Commodity Assistance Programs Action Needed

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

Congress needs to increase TEFAP funding to help individuals and families access nutritious commodities to help stave off food insecurity and alleviate hunger by:

- Reauthorizing and increasing mandatory funding for TEFAP food purchases \$500 million per year, adjusted for inflation.
 - Reauthorizing and increasing discretionary funding for TEFAP storage and distribution to \$200 million per year.
 - Reauthorizing TEFAP discretionary infrastructure grants to \$15 million per year.
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Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) Action Needed

CSFP

Congress needs to:

- Reauthorize CSFP.
 - Exempt Medicare payments from the gross income calculation used to determine CSFP eligibility.
 - Reduce the administrative burdens for program participants.
 - Increase program efficiency by streamlining reporting requirements.
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