

Detroit workers denounce food stamp cuts

WSWS reporting team
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Automatic cuts in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) went into effect Friday, resulting in a reduction of food assistance benefits for more than 47 million Americans and approximately 1.8 million Michigan residents.

With the winter season approaching, many families will be facing the prospect of paying higher heating bills, the hardship of which will now be compounded by the food stamp cuts. In Detroit, the official unemployment rate is over 16 percent, while the median household income, in 2011, was \$25,000—a number barely higher than the poverty threshold. Furthermore, utility monopolies such as DTE Energy are notorious for shutting off heat in the middle of winter, without any warning, which can lead to deadly consequences.

A *World Socialist Web Site* reporting team went to University Foods, near the Wayne State University in Detroit campus, to speak to city residents about the food stamp cuts. Despite the cold weather, many stopped to express their anger.

Steven Jackson, a former Chrysler worker of nine years who is currently disabled and on supplemental security income, said, “This is bad.” Jackson stated that he and his family were “already struggling for food, rent, gas and car insurance” and that he didn’t know what he would do if he suddenly lost all of assistance. “This is happening all over the world,” he said, “not just here. It just keeps getting worse and worse.”

One Detroit resident said, “I don’t use SNAP, but I know a lot of people who do. I believe the one-percenters do not care about us...why should they? They’re not being impacted by it.” She added, “You know, this reminds me of something my son says, you shouldn’t be afraid of the man in the ski mask with the gun...you should be afraid of the main in the suit.”

Sorell, a school employee, asked angrily, “Why do they cut the programs that the people need the most?”

Sharon King, a retired teacher and grandmother of two, said of the SNAP cuts, “I think it’s disgusting. It’s like they’re punishing the children...and for what reason? They should have locked someone up for the stock market crash, but instead, who are they punishing? Us. They shouldn’t cut SNAP, they should *increase* it and they need to stop threatening us with more cuts.”

A former transportation company owner, who is currently retired, said, “Even people who work can’t afford things. If you make minimum wage, there is no possible way that you can afford rent, utilities, gas, groceries, car insurance and other things. So then, what happens when you cut food stamps as well?” Commenting on the problems of Detroit, he said, “What has happened in this city, it had nothing to do with skin color.”

“I was on food stamps before, and I hated it,” said Candice, a mother of a young child and a student at Wayne State. “I wanted to be able to work for myself and not have to depend on them. But the money you get working just doesn’t cut it. People really need food stamps. They’ve been doing this for eons—the poor always have to pay for everything.”

“The last round of cuts for me was \$8,” said Raymond, a cooling technician in the auto industry. “That’s not a lot, but with conditions as they are, even that much hurts. If I didn’t have access to food stamps, I’d be done with.”

Justine Thomas said she was surprised to hear about the cuts because the media hadn’t mentioned anything about it. Thomas, a retired worker who is disabled, said she had to get a lawyer to fight for her to receive SSI over the course of nine years. She would be worse off today if she didn’t have disability benefits. Thomas said she believes the economy is still in recession. “My husband and I often ask the question, how do they get all this money to pay for wars? It is a waste of money

spent on spying on people who are not criminals.”



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