

A punishing assault on mothers and babies: WIC nutrition program targeted by government shutdown and Trump budget

Kate Randall
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The ongoing government shutdown, provoked by the Trump administration and enabled by Democrats in Congress, is being utilized to implement an unprecedented assault on the working class, focusing on the mass firings of federal workers and the destruction of vital social programs. Central to this program of social counterrevolution is the immediate threat to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, widely known as WIC, a program serving nearly 7 million pregnant women, new mothers, infants and young children who rely on it as a nutritional lifeline.

In the over 50 years since WIC was created, Congress has never cut WIC benefits, ensuring the program had enough funding to serve its projected caseload. The devastating cuts proposed in Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill would deprive struggling families of the essential nutrition they need during critical developmental stages.

The federal government shutdown, coinciding with the beginning of a new fiscal year, means that WIC, a discretionary program dependent on annual appropriations, is critically low on funds. This assault is a deliberate and calculated maneuver, aligning with the strategy of establishing a war-ready military-police dictatorship, demonstrated in the effort of the White House to establish martial law through federalizing National Guard troops for use against the populations of Portland, Chicago and other US urban areas.

Experts from the National WIC Association (NWA) anticipate that WIC funding on hand will only sustain operations for the short term—likely one to two weeks. Beyond this brief period, the failure to rapidly reopen the government could force state WIC directors to manage their programs with insufficient funds.

WIC is currently being kept afloat temporarily by several sources, including a \$150 million contingency fund and monthly rebates from infant formula manufacturers, which averaged \$135 million earlier this fiscal year. States have historically relied on their general funds to continue WIC services during a shutdown and were later reimbursed, but it is doubtful the federal government will take the same action this time. State WIC officials in places like Washington state have indicated they do not have the financial capacity to backfill federal funding if the shutdown lasts longer than one to two weeks.

If funding is disrupted, states may be forced to discontinue services for program recipients. The potential consequences for low-income pregnant and postpartum women, infants and young children are devastating.

"There [are] going to be infants skipping feeds ... pregnant women skipping meals so that they can feed their toddlers," Raechel Sims, a

spokesperson for Washington's Department of Health, told WDBO in Orlando, warning that ending the program could be catastrophic for recipients.

Project 2025 seeks WIC elimination

The threat posed by the shutdown is inseparable from the long-term, calculated dismantling of social programs outlined in Project 2025, the reactionary policy blueprint organized by the Heritage Foundation and co-authored by Trump's budget director, Russell Vought.

Project 2025 recommends moving the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to the Department of Health and Human Services. In addition to WIC, programs currently under FNS include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program, among others. These nutrition programs would be moved to the HHS under the leadership of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who under his misnamed Make America Healthy Again motto is working to dismantle and undermine a host of services that protect the health and welfare of the American population.

WIC is specifically targeted for elimination in Project 2025. Even absent full elimination, the Trump administration's budget request for fiscal year 2026 seeks to decrease WIC funding by nearly \$300 million. This proposal involves deep reductions to the Cash Value Benefit (CVB) for fruits and vegetables:

- Monthly CVB for breastfeeding mothers would plummet from \$52 to just \$13.
- CVB for young children would be reduced from \$26 to \$10.

The National WIC Association condemned these reductions, noting that they would take healthy food off children's plates. These benefits are the only defense against the skyrocketing costs of nutritious food for families in the program.

Recipients spoke openly about the lifeline WIC represents:

• Sarah Manasrah, a mother of two who works as a doula, stated that WIC is a "lifesaving program for families" and that most families she works with rely on it for infant formula, which is literally keeping babies alive. She told ABC News that members of Congress "do not care about families" and are pushing through their political agenda.

• Barbie Anderson, who works in billing part-time, while her husband works in a lumber yard, stated to CNN that her family

depends on WIC to buy essential items like milk, eggs and oranges, and that without it, “We don’t have the money to buy milk, eggs and everything that the kids need right now.”

- Taylor Moyer, a mother of three who recently separated from her husband, has been receiving WIC since her first son was born nine years ago. In an interview with the Associated Press, she recalled times she “really wondered how I was going to feed my family,” and WIC allowed her to purchase nutritious food like rice, avocados and eggs instead of only cheaper, calorie-dense processed options.

- Sheila Epps works in technology at a financial services firm, and her husband works in manufacturing. She is concerned her benefits might “just disappear.” She told CNN that if the shutdown continues, she and her husband would have to dip into savings or she might take a second job, such as driving for Uber, because “I’d do anything to feed my granddaughter.”

Research confirms that the loss of WIC benefits directly harms the adult women in the household (most often mothers), who protect their children by reducing their own consumption and experiencing a large increase in food insecurity. This reveals that WIC benefits entire households, not simply the children eligible to receive it.

Historical and modern-day parallels

The Trump regime’s attack on WIC and other social programs, while prioritizing the military-police apparatus, has ominous current and historical parallels. The ruling elite is demanding the working class accept decreased quality of life, worsened health outcomes—and ultimately decreased life expectancy—to fund the consolidation of dictatorship and preparation for war.

In the genocidal Israeli assault on Gaza, food has been deliberately used as a weapon to starve the Palestinian population. The Palestine Red Crescent Society and the World Health Organization state that 470,000 to 500,000 Palestinians in Gaza—nearly a quarter of the population—are facing imminent starvation due to famine conditions officially declared in parts of Gaza. Nearly one in five children under five years of age in Gaza City are acutely malnourished, with malnutrition rates tripling since June 2025. Over 40 percent of pregnant and breastfeeding women in Gaza are reported to be severely malnourished.

The Gaza Ministry of Health and international monitoring organizations report that as of early September 2025 the overall death toll linked to hunger and malnutrition had reached over 360 people since the start of the conflict in October 2023.

In Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1937, before the full horrors of the war and the Holocaust, there was a substantial increase in mortality rates in most age groups, exceeding even the rates seen in 1932, the worst year of the Great Depression. This occurred despite a rapid increase in real GDP per capita.

A major reason for this lay in the economic policies of the Nazi regime, with military expenditures increased at the expense of public health measures. Furthermore, the policy of curtailed food imports and price controls adversely affected the nutritional status of the population, particularly by restricting imports of protein-rich agricultural products. Children’s heights, a key indicator of nutritional quality, stagnated during this period.

For those pseudo-lefts and others in the Democratic Party’s orbit,

such comparisons would likely be denounced as catastrophizing. The Trump administration’s support for the Gaza genocide and its moves toward dictatorial forms of rule put the lie to such claims.

Mobilize the working class to defend social programs

The social content of Trump’s program is the destruction of millions of jobs, the dismantling of programs won through decades of struggle, and the lowering of life expectancy. The working class is the main target of these fascistic policies.

The Democrats, the other capitalist party in America, are utterly incapable of fighting this assault. They frame the crisis as a budget negotiation over healthcare fixes, deliberately masking the fact that the shutdown is being used to prepare the framework for dictatorship. The trade union apparatus, likewise, functions merely as an industrial police force, blocking any genuine struggle by workers and confining their response to legal challenges while pleading with the administration to “get to work.”

The working class cannot stand passively by as the Trump regime plots social counterrevolution and policies that would literally snatch food out of children’s mouths. The only path forward is the independent mobilization of the working class. Workers must respond to the government shutdown and Trump’s conspiracy through mass, collective action. This requires building a new form of organization: rank-and-file committees. These committees must be established in every workplace, school and neighborhood to organize resistance against Trump’s fascistic government.

This struggle must mobilize the strength of the working class in defense of fundamental social rights, including the right to high-quality healthcare, jobs and a livable income. The fight against dictatorship is impossible without the fight for equality. The independent mobilization of the working class for socialism is the only way to defend jobs, living standards and democratic rights against dictatorship, war and capitalist exploitation.



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