

Democrats prepare to cave, as Trump refuses to release food stamp funding, threatens no back pay for furloughed workers

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The Trump administration has indicated that it intends to defy court orders issued last week directing it to release emergency funding for food stamps. More than 42 million people who depend on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) already missed their payments due November 1, because the White House is using mass hunger as a political weapon in the government shutdown and the erection of a dictatorship.

Earlier, the administration had said that it would pay out food stamps at only 50 percent of their normal rate and on a delayed timetable, which itself would have thrown tens of millions of people into food insecurity.

On Tuesday morning, Trump posted a rant on his Truth Social account:

SNAP BENEFITS, which increased by Billions and Billions of Dollars (MANY FOLD!) during Crooked Joe Biden's disastrous term in office (Due to the fact that they were haphazardly "handed" to anyone for the asking, as opposed to just those in need, which is the purpose of SNAP!), will be given only when the Radical Left Democrats open up government, which they can easily do, and not before!

Later in the day, Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt denied that the White House was refusing to distribute food stamps, claiming instead that its plan was to pay out 50 percent of normal benefits. But this statement was only meant to give its flagrantly illegal actions a veneer of plausible deniability. Even while issuing this denial, Leavitt admitted that "it's going to take some time" for recipients to receive the payments.

"We are digging into a contingency fund that is supposed to be for emergencies, catastrophes, for war, and the

president does not want to have to tap into this fund in the future," she said, repeating the false assertion by the White House that the \$6 billion fund is not meant to cover funding during government shutdowns.

The administration's strategy is to stall long enough to render the court ruling meaningless. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins posted on X/Twitter: "This will be a cumbersome process, including revised eligibility systems, State notification procedures, and ultimately, *delayed benefits for weeks* [emphasis added]." While finding complicated methods of dividing by two to delay payments, she blamed the crisis on "challenges caused by Senate Democrats' refusal to reopen the government," and ended with the blackmail statement: "If the government opens, families get their FULL benefit much more quickly."

Lawyers in the case that resulted in last week's court order have now filed for a temporary restraining order against the government, pointing out that officials have made clear their intention to violate the terms of the order, which required the funds to be "expeditiously" distributed no later than November 5. According to the filing, the government has indicated that "it may take up to several months for partial benefits to be provided."

There are also renewed signs that the administration intends to refuse back pay to hundreds of thousands of furloughed federal employees. *Government Executive* reported last Friday that the latest round of furlough notices omitted "language assuring employees that back pay was guaranteed when the shutdown concluded."

All of this forms part of a broader "hunger plan" by Trump, aimed at using the shutdown to carry out massive attacks on the working class. His policy amounts to a vast redistribution of wealth to the rich, offloading the cost of the capitalist crisis onto the backs of workers and the poor.

The real social content of Trump's plot for dictatorship is the ruthless defense of the corporate oligarchy. The lavish renovations now underway at the White House, funded by

tech billionaires, make clear that America's super-rich know exactly which side Trump's bread is buttered on. According to a recent Oxfam report, 10 US billionaires have increased their wealth sixfold since 2020 alone. Their net worth has already risen by almost \$750 billion this year.

There are growing signs that the Democrats are preparing to cave in to Trump. Some Republicans are predicting that the government could reopen as soon as this week. According to press reports, a deal is being worked out in which, in exchange for enough Democrats joining with Republicans to secure the 60 votes needed to end a filibuster, the Democrats would receive a meaningless promise for a vote in the future over whether to restore tax credits for Obamacare healthcare plans. Such a measure would have little to no chance of passing.

No doubt a major factor in these calculations is the New York City election, which resulted in the victory of Democratic Socialists of America member Zohran Mamdani. Although Mamdani has spent months seeking to reassure Wall Street that he poses no threat to its interests, the vote itself is a sign of growing opposition to capitalism among broad layers of the population—an opposition that terrifies the Democratic Party far more than the danger of fascism.

The human impact of the shutdown is catastrophic.

In Massachusetts, one in six residents, or about 667,000 households, relies on SNAP benefits. More than 1 million state residents could lose access to federal food benefits, including children, the elderly and residents with disabilities.

In Lynn, a city north of Boston, more than one in four residents receives SNAP benefits. The city's downtown is home to about a dozen food pantries and facilities that serve free meals, along with a Community Fridge, which stocks meals, pantry staples and perishables for people struggling with food insecurity.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to Beverly Brown at the Catholic Charities food pantry in downtown Lynn. She said:

This is Thanksgiving month. In at a time like this, when we're supposed to be giving thanks, and families coming together, when we had so much tragedy with the virus and everything, and families couldn't be together, and money is tight, you know?

And to take resources like food from seniors and children is wrong. [Trump's] multimillion-dollar ballroom is not more important than what's in people's stomachs.

Reacting to Trump's post on Truth Social that he would not pay out the SNAP benefits until the government shutdown is over, despite a court ruling, Beverly retorted:

So the people who are getting food stamps, senior citizens and children, are sponges? And so are the parents who have to get food to put in their stomach so they can get out in the world and make a difference in our world? That does not make sense, right?

In San Diego, California, WSWs reporters spoke to Ricky, a freelance videographer, and his partner at the Abundant Grace Christian Center food distribution site. They are forced to rely on assistance even though they both work full-time. He and his partner came to stock up on essentials in anticipation of worsening shortages. He noted that in a few weeks lines will likely be "three times as long" after SNAP benefits have run out. "If they don't bring back the benefits, the streets are going to be way worse," he said.

"How do you take that [SNAP] away," he asked, "and give hundreds of millions of dollars for countries to fight wars? It's ridiculous." He noted that working people are being left to fend for themselves while the wealthy live comfortably. He said that "we should all get free food," and scoffed at the idea that basic social benefits like food and healthcare are "extreme."

WSWS reporters also spoke to Diego, a father of two young children, who had just picked up food with his wife and two babies. Though he and his wife both work six days a week, his family was already out of food at the start of the month due to the cutoff of SNAP benefits. "I'm more upset about it for my kids than anything. I could always figure things out, but they depend on us," he said.

The working class must now emerge in the fight against capitalism and inequality. It is the only social force capable of opposing the dictatorship of the corporate elite. The central demand must be the expropriation of the billionaires and major corporations in order to end hunger, provide free, high-quality healthcare and guarantee all the basic social rights of the working class.



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