

Trump seeks Supreme Court help in denying food to millions, as shutdown crisis worsens

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The longest government shutdown in United States history continued Friday. The Trump administration doubled down on its hunger policy aimed starving 42 million Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients as part of an ongoing war on the working class, aimed at shifting the entire burden of the crisis of capitalism onto workers and their families.

In major cities and small towns across the United States, home to the most billionaires in the world, workers and their families are lining up to receive emergency food rations. From Philadelphia to San Antonio and Seattle, workers, retirees and students are queuing up at churches, mosques, synagogues and community centers for food.

While the administration claims there is “no money” for food stamps, it is spending millions of dollars a day on war and repression. On Thursday night, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth announced yet another war crime in the Caribbean, a “lethal kinetic strike” in international waters that killed three so-called “narco-terrorists” without charges, trial or any pretense of due process.

The US government has billions of dollars to deploy thousands of troops to menace Latin American governments and murder boaters, but the Trump administration is arguing in court against funding SNAP, the largest anti-hunger program in the US.

On Friday, a federal judge rejected the Trump administration’s appeal to stay a previous injunction that required the administration to fully fund the SNAP program.

Following Friday’s ruling, Trump’s Justice Department immediately filed an emergency appeal to the Supreme Court. Late Friday evening, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, appointed by President Joe Biden, temporarily blocked the lower court’s order requiring the Trump administration to resume full SNAP payments.

In its appeal Friday before the District Court, Justice Department lawyers argued that the injunction “makes a mockery of the separation of powers.”

The claim is laughable. Trump himself has shredded the supposed separation of powers and the Constitution. In the last 10 months, the administration has waged undeclared wars across the Caribbean and Pacific, illegally bombed Iran,

imposed tariffs and taxes by decree without congressional approval, and, through manufactured “national emergencies,” unilaterally deployed military and federal forces in major cities to detain and deport immigrants and harass and kidnap workers and students.

Less than a week after Trump hosted a “Great Gatsby”-themed party at Mar-a-Lago, government lawyers argued in court that funds are not available to finance both school lunch programs and SNAP recipients, many of whom are children. The Justice Department’s brief argues that fulfilling the court’s order would “force USDA (US Department of Agriculture) to permanently impair the Child Nutrition Programs to the tune of \$4 billion” and insists that “the equities and public interest cut strongly in favor of a stay.”

The administration complains that the court “tarred USDA’s decision as arbitrary and capricious by pointing to President Trump’s public comments warning that SNAP benefits would not be available unless Congress reopens the government.” According to the brief, “the President was simply stating the facts.”

In reality, Trump’s statements and the government’s legal reasoning expose a conscious effort to use hunger as a political weapon. The appeal warns ominously that if funds are transferred to provide food assistance, there is no guarantee that Congress will replenish them—an explicit acknowledgment that the administration and its allies in Congress intend to let the programs collapse. The appeal states:

[T]his Court should allow USDA to continue with the partial payment and not compel the agency to transfer billions of dollars from another safety-net program with no certainty of their replenishment.

The same government that has showered Wall Street and major corporations with subsidies, financed continuous war, slashed taxes for the rich and diverted funds during the government shutdown to pay the military and the immigration Gestapo, now declares that feeding the poor would impair the public interest.

As food insecurity mounts, the shutdown is wreaking havoc on transportation. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy has ordered airlines to reduce flights by up to 10 percent across 40 airports, including nearly every major US hub, to conserve funds and cope with short-staffed air traffic centers. Air traffic controllers and other airport workers have missed at least two paychecks since the shutdown began on October 1. Hundreds of flights were canceled Friday, adding to the chaos.

The situation in the control towers has become desperate. Nick Daniels, president of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, told CNN:

We're seeing air traffic controllers resign. We didn't see that in 2019. We are 400 less controllers today than we were in the 2019 shutdown. And now they've been stretched so thin for so long, with so much pressure on their backs, that they're actually resigning from the profession.

He added that the shutdown has made it impossible for many controllers to live:

Especially our new employees that are just training or starting out in this career... they're calling their employer and saying, "I have no gas today. I cannot pay for my child care. Can I bring my children to work?" These are real situations. ... They're already racking up their credit cards, are taking out every loan that they can.

Sara Nelson, international president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, told MSNBC that the situation is "urgent" and that workers are reaching a "breaking point." She said:

They are heroes, but they're humans, and humans will break at a certain point when they can no longer put a tank of gas in their car, when they can no longer get a meal to eat, when they can no longer buy their own insulin to take care of themselves or their families.

Nelson and Daniels, like the rest of the trade union bureaucrats, offered no path of struggle. Rather than calling for strike action by airline and airport workers to demand full funding for social programs that benefit the working class and the resignation and imprisonment of the criminals responsible for starving children and withholding paychecks, Nelson

pleaded with Congress to pass a continuing resolution and reopen the government. This is the demand of the Republican Party, with increasing support from Democratic senators, which leaves all political power in the hands of the same corrupt political establishment that is imposing the shutdown.

The Democratic Party's response has been entirely within the framework of Trump's austerity program. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer proposed reopening the government in exchange for a one-year extension of Obamacare subsidies.

"Democrats are ready to clear the way to quickly pass a government funding bill that includes health-care affordability," Schumer said, calling it "an extension of current law—something we do all the time around here."

Republicans immediately rejected the offer. Senator John Thune, the Republican Majority Leader, called the plan a "nonstarter." Senator Lindsey Graham denounced it as "political terrorism."

Thune indicated that senators would remain in Washington over the weekend to continue negotiations. Trump, furious at any delay, demanded that the filibuster be abolished so Republicans could force through a funding bill without Democratic votes.

"The United States Senate should not leave town until they have a Deal to end the Democrat Shutdown. If they can't reach a Deal, the Republicans should terminate the Filibuster, IMMEDIATELY..." Trump posted on his Truth Social platform Friday.

The shutdown crisis is not simply a temporary impasse but a manifestation of the global breakdown of capitalism. The ruling class can no longer resolve its contradictions through normal democratic procedures.

Hunger and unemployment are not the result of mismanagement but of class policy. The fight to end the shutdown cannot be entrusted to the Democrats or to the union bureaucracy but requires the independent mobilization of workers in every industry against the entire capitalist system.



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