

5.5 million people, including 2 million children, cut from SNAP in first year of Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill

Kate Randall
27 October 2026

Participation in SNAP fell by 5.5 million people in the year after passage of Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) in July 2025. The number of Americans receiving SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, dropped to 36.1 million in July 2026, the last month with data on all states, its lowest point in 17 years, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP).

Millions are being plunged further into hunger and poverty as part of the bipartisan drive to slash social spending to fund war, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Gestapo and other police repression.

SNAP enrollment fell in every state except Alaska, according to US Department of Agriculture (USDA) data: by close to 5 percent or more in 48 states, nearly 10 percent or more in 26 states and close to 20 percent or more in eight. Arizona's caseload plunged by nearly 51 percent. Declines of 20 percent or more were also recorded in Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Nebraska, Nevada and Oklahoma, and according to more recent state figures, in Indiana, Kansas and Texas.

The Congressional Budget Office had projected that SNAP participation would average 2.8 million fewer people in 2026 than in 2025. Based on USDA data through July, the actual figure for the year is on track to be about 4.5 million.

Children account for a huge share of those cut off SNAP benefits. In the 28 states with available data, 1.5 million fewer children were receiving SNAP than in July 2025—more than 40 percent of the nearly 3.7 million people dropped in those states. Texas alone has 367,000 fewer children on SNAP, Florida 256,000. The CBPP estimates that nationwide about 2 million children have lost food assistance since the law took effect.

At 36.1 million, participation is well below the nearly 37 million of February 2020, before SNAP expanded in

response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The last drop this steep came after the 1996 welfare "reform" signed by Democratic President Bill Clinton, who pledged to "end welfare as we know it." From April 1997 to April 1998, the food stamp rolls fell by 13 percent, or 3 million people, and by 2001 only 54 percent of eligible people were receiving benefits.

The collapse in enrollment does not reflect an improving economy. The official unemployment rate has been flat at about 4 percent since July 2025, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Year-over-year real wages have declined for six straight months (through September). People are not leaving SNAP because they have found decent-paying jobs. They are being deliberately driven off the program.

At Minnesota Farmfest on August 4, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins boasted: "For those who love work and celebrate work and want people to work and not be on food stamps, it's a pretty big win when we've moved 5 million people off food stamps, y'all." Rollins, who was paid more than \$1 million as president of the Trump-aligned America First Policy Institute, declared in January that a healthy meal could be had for \$3: "a piece of chicken, a piece of broccoli, you know, a corn tortilla and one other thing"—a menu critics have compared to prison rations.

The administration has taken steps to ensure the consequences of its policies go unrecorded. In September 2025 the USDA terminated its annual Household Food Security Report, the government's principal measure of hunger for three decades, denouncing it as "redundant, costly, politicized and extraneous" and claiming it did "nothing more than fear monger." The final report found 47.9 million people, including 14.1 million children, living in food-insecure households in 2024.

Independent data show hunger at crisis levels. The Urban Institute's Well-Being and Basic Needs Survey, conducted in December 2025, found that nearly one in four adults (24.2 percent) reported household food insecurity over the previous year. The rate was 31.9 percent among adults living with children, including 16 percent reporting very low food security—skipping meals or going whole days without eating. Among black and Hispanic adults, the rates were 36.5 percent and 37.1 percent, respectively, compared with 18.1 percent for white adults. A staggering 41.8 percent of disabled adults were food insecure. An NBC News analysis found that nearly three-quarters of 48 of the nation's largest food banks saw demand rise over the past year.

Established under the Food Stamp Act of 1964 to combat hunger in low-income households, SNAP has long been the nation's first line of defense against food insecurity. According to the CBPP, it "kept 6.6 million people above the poverty line before the COVID-19 pandemic, including 3 million children." It is now being transformed into a weapon of class war.

The principal mechanism of the purge is a vast expansion of work requirements. Adults aged 18 to 64—up from 54, the limit set by the 2023 debt-ceiling deal signed by Democratic President Joe Biden, which had raised it from 49—must now document at least 80 hours a month of work, job training or volunteering or be cut off after three months in any three-year period.

Parents are exempt only if their youngest child is under 14, down from 18. The law eliminated exemptions for veterans, people experiencing homelessness and young people aging out of foster care. Refugees, asylees and trafficking survivors have lost eligibility altogether. Waivers for areas with few jobs now apply only where unemployment exceeds 10 percent—a level last reached in the depths of the Great Recession.

The law also forces states to pay 75 percent of SNAP administrative costs, up from 50 percent, and, beginning in October 2027, a share of benefit costs tied to their payment error rates, giving them every incentive to slash their rolls. The administration has meanwhile demanded that states hand over sensitive data on recipients, including Social Security numbers, income and immigration documents, in the name of fighting "fraud." The real aim is to cut off still more people.

The SNAP cuts are part of a broader assault, including more than \$1 trillion slashed from Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act and other federal health programs. While the poor are ordered to tighten their belts, the law

permanently extended the 2017 individual tax cuts for the wealthy, authorized \$150 billion in new military spending, including \$25 billion for the "Golden Dome" missile defense system, and allocated \$170 billion for border enforcement and mass deportations, including 10,000 new ICE agents.

The claim that food stamps breed "dependency" is a slander against the working class. Most SNAP recipients are children, the elderly or people with disabilities, and most nonelderly adults without disabilities who receive benefits work, often in low-wage jobs with irregular hours. Joan Steenburgh, a 70-year-old former nurse in rural Virginia caring for two children, told PBS News Hour her benefits were cut from \$500 a month to \$300 and that she may have to go back to work.

The fight against hunger is inseparable from the fight against the capitalist system that produces it. The same crisis that drives the ruling class to wage war abroad—against Iran, in Ukraine, in Gaza—compels it to impoverish workers at home. The hundreds of billions spent on war and the ICE police-state apparatus are being extracted from the working class through the destruction of programs like SNAP.

Workers can place no confidence in the Democratic Party, whose program to fight the cuts in Trump's OBBBA consists of calls to vote for Democrats in the upcoming midterm elections. What is required is the formation of rank-and-file committees in every workplace, school and neighborhood, independent of the union bureaucracy and both big business parties, to fight for the restoration and expansion of SNAP, the defense of Medicaid and Medicare, and the indexing of wages and benefits to the cost of living.

These demands require a direct challenge to the wealth of the financial oligarchy. The giant food corporations and banks must be transformed into publicly owned enterprises under democratic workers' control, and the fortunes of the billionaires expropriated to meet social need. Nutrition, healthcare, housing and education are basic social rights. Securing access to them requires the independent political mobilization of the working class in the fight for socialism.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact