



**Food for the Hungry  
Shouldn't have a  
Time Limit**

**SNAP Matters.**



**Comment today at <http://www.frac.org/timelimitcomments>**

## **Don't Let Trump Administration Take Food Away from 755,000 People**

The Trump Administration's proposed Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rule would time limit food benefits for unemployed and underemployed people who can't document sufficient weekly work hours. They would lose SNAP eligibility after three months. Anti-hunger advocates are urged to submit a comment expressing their strong opposition to the proposed rule during the 60-day public comment period that ends on April 2, 2019.

**Tell the Trump Administration the proposed rule is harsh and unfair. It would:**

- **Cause serious harm to individuals, communities, and the nation.**
- **Fuel rates of hunger and poverty** by denying vulnerable people nutrition assistance at a time when they most need it.
- **Do nothing to improve the health and employment** of those impacted by the proposed rule.
- **Harm the economy, grocery retailers, and agricultural producers** by reducing the amount of SNAP dollars available to spur local economic activity.
- **Sidestep Congress**, which rejected these changes when it enacted the 2018 Farm Bill.

*We ask that you modify the language provided in our model comment letter (available at <http://www.frac.org/timelimitcomments>) so that at least one-third of it reflects your own thoughts and experiences. This will ensure that each submitted comment counts as a unique comment.*

For feedback and technical assistance, contact Ellen Vollinger at [evollinger@frac.org](mailto:evollinger@frac.org).

**Find these resources to help you craft your message at <http://www.frac.org/timelimitcomments>:**

- FRAC Model Comment Letter for Anti-Hunger Advocates
- SNAP Strengths
- FRAC statement
- SNAP Monthly Data: January–July 2018
- FRAC analysis of Nutrition Title in Farm Bill
- A Brief Review of Strategies to Bolster SNAP's Role in Improving Nutrition as well as Food Security
- Hunger & Health: The Role of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in Improving Health and Well-Being
- Unworkable and Unwise Working Paper

*See the model comment letter on the reverse side of this handout!*

**Model Comment Letter** (download the letter at <http://www.frac.org/timelimitcomments>).

Dear Certification Policy Branch:

[I/we] take this the opportunity to comment in opposition to USDA's Proposed Rulemaking on SNAP requirements and services for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs). The proposed changes would cause serious harm to [fill in population group or sector], our community and the nation.

**SNAP Matters**

SNAP plays a critical role in addressing hunger and food insecurity in our community. It is the first line of defense against hunger for low-income residents.

[Insert information about food insecurity in the state and/or city. Insert information about the positive impacts that SNAP has for health and well-being and for economic activity for local communities—see, e.g., information contained in <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/frac-facts-snap-strengths.pdf>] Based on USDA Economic Research Service analysis, it is estimated that each \$1 in federal SNAP benefits generates \$1.79 in economic activity. Those dollars help many food retailers operating on thin margins to remain in business; something that improves food access for all residents.

[Local farmers' markets receive revenue from SNAP purchases and many of those markets also participate in incentive programs that provide SNAP shoppers with bonuses for purchasing fruits and vegetables.]

**Area Waivers and Individual Exemptions Provide Ways to Modestly Ameliorate the Harsh Impact of Arbitrary Time Limits**

Federal law limits SNAP eligibility for childless unemployed and underemployed adults age 18-50 (except for those who are exempt) to just three months out of every three years unless they are able to obtain and maintain an average of 20 hours a week of employment. This rule is harsh and unfair. It harms vulnerable people by denying them food benefits at a time when they most need it and it does not result in increased employment and earnings. By time-limiting food assistance to this group, federal law has shifted the burden of providing food to these unemployed individuals from SNAP to states, cities, and local charities.

Under the law, states have some flexibility to ameliorate the impact of the cutoff. They can request a waiver of the time limit for areas within the state that have 10 percent or higher unemployment rates or, based on other economic indicators, have "insufficient jobs." Moreover, states have discretion to exempt individuals from the time limit by utilizing a pool of exemptions (referred to as "15 percent exemptions"). While the 2018 Farm Bill modified the number of exemptions that states can receive each year from 15 percent to 12 percent, it did not change their ability to carry over unused exemptions forward. [Insert any information about how area waivers and individual exemptions have helped your state and community]

**Proposed Rule Undermining Law's Safety Valves Should Be Rejected** - [I/We] strongly oppose the proposed rule that would expose even more people to the arbitrary food cutoff policy by limiting state flexibility regarding area waivers and individual exemptions. By the Administration's own calculations, the proposed rule would take food away from 755,000 low-income Americans, cutting food benefits by \$15 billion over ten years. The Administration does not estimate any improvements in health or employment among the affected population.

The proposed rule would make it harder for areas with elevated unemployment rates to qualify for waivers of the time limit by adding a 7 percent unemployment rate floor as a condition. [This would have a negative impact in our state. Describe any areas in the state that might have unemployment rates under 7 percent but still have a lack of jobs for low-income adults; note any challenges—such as lack of transportation or a lack of education -- these individuals have in finding work.]

The proposed rule would make it harder for states to obtain and implement area waivers by dropping statewide waivers except when a state triggers extended benefits under Unemployment Insurance. It would unduly limit the economic factors considered in assessing an area's eligibility for a waiver (e.g., by no longer allowing employment to population ratios that demonstrate economic weakness to qualify areas for waivers). It would undermine efficient state implementation of area waivers by limiting their duration to 12 months and delaying their start dates until after USDA processes the request. In addition, the proposed rule would remove states' ability to use exemptions accumulated prior to the rule's implementation as well limit the time states' have to use exemptions they receive in the future. [Add any examples or details about how these proposals would affect your state, or a region in your state.]

The Department provides little analysis to explain its conclusions about the impacts the changes would have on individuals and population groups nor of realistic plans to avert harm from those changes. USDA merely asserts its expectation that two-thirds of those individuals made newly subject to the time limit "would not meet the requirements for failure to engage meaningfully in work or work training." Moreover, while the Department concedes that the proposed changes "have the potential for disparately impacting certain protected groups due to factors affecting rates of employment of these groups, [it] find[s] that implementation of mitigation strategies and monitoring by the Civil Rights Division of FNS will lessen these impacts." But no explanation of the mitigation strategies and monitoring is provided, so there is no opportunity for us to comment on whether the acknowledged disparate impact will in fact be mitigated.

The Administration proposed rule seeks to end run Congress, which just concluded a review and reauthorization of SNAP in the 2018 Farm Bill and did not make the changes proposed. The rules governing areas' eligibility for waivers and individual exemptions have been in place for nearly 20 years. In that time, the waiver rules have proven to be reasonable, transparent, and manageable for states to operationalize.

[I/We] strongly oppose the proposed rule that would expose even more people to the arbitrary SNAP food cutoff policy and harm our community.