

Amid Rising Hunger, Chairman Thompson's Farm Bill Proposal Would Cut Crucial SNAP Benefits for Latino Families

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a critical lifeline for Latinos,* who increasingly struggle to feed their families. As Congress considers the upcoming Farm Bill reauthorization, **House Agriculture Committee Chairman G.T. Thompson's proposed cuts to SNAP benefits threaten to undermine this vital support system and deepen the hunger crisis in Latino communities.**

For many Latino families across the United States, the rising cost of food and necessities, coupled with post-pandemic cuts to SNAP benefits, have created serious problems paying for food. According to recent polling by UnidosUS, [54%](#) of Latino voters cite the rising cost of living and inflation as the most important issue for public officials to address; and [82%](#) of these voters focus on the cost of food and other basic expenses, more than reference the cost of housing, gasoline, or any other necessity.

Even more distressing is the rising number of Latino families who find themselves unable to feed their families. According to new research by the Urban Institute, nearly [two in five Latino adults](#) report that their families do not have enough food to eat—more than in any other ethnic or racial group, and significantly more than in the past. Nearly [one in seven Latino households](#) (14%) are now forced to take on debt just to put food on the table, more than double the rate of non-Hispanic white households (6%).

Compounding the challenges posed by high food prices, last year's SNAP benefits plummeted following the end of pandemic-era assistance. In March 2020, Congress authorized emergency allotments that increased SNAP benefits to help low-income households weather the economic crisis caused by COVID-19. However, in December 2022, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 abruptly returned SNAP benefits to pre-pandemic levels as of March 2023 in most states. Every household in those states received at least \$95 a month less; some households saw

* The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.

reductions of \$250 a month or more. The steepest cut was for older adults at the minimum benefit level who saw their monthly SNAP benefits fall from \$281 to \$23. These benefit cuts dealt a heavy blow to SNAP households already struggling with inflated food prices.

Every month, SNAP is a lifeline for more than [40 million Americans](#), providing critical nutrition assistance to help families put food on the table. For the Latino community, SNAP is particularly important, with more than 5 million Hispanic children and 5 million Hispanic adults [relying on the program for food](#) in 2021, the most recent year for which national statistics are available. Table 1, below, shows the number of Latinos and other Americans in each state who participated in SNAP during the average year from 2017 through 2019, the most recent years for which reliable state estimates are available.

Despite high food costs, rising levels of hunger, and SNAP benefits that just took a major hit, the Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee proposes further cuts in SNAP benefits, making it even harder for millions of hard-working Latinos to feed their families. The proposal makes these cuts by forbidding the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) from taking any factor other than inflation into account when it updates the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), which is used to set SNAP benefits. This would force USDA to ignore all other changes in how Americans buy, prepare, and consume their food. According to Chairman Thompson, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that this change would cut benefits by [\\$30 billion](#) over the next decade. In its initial years, the proposal would take [an entire day's worth of food](#) away from the average family each month. By the end of the decade, each family would lose two days' worth of food per month.

The Chairman argues that his proposal doesn't cut SNAP benefits, but the nonpartisan CBO disagrees, [forecasting a substantial drop](#). By forcing USDA to ignore all changes in how Americans buy, prepare, and consume their food, the proposal would prevent SNAP benefits from keeping pace with the actual cost of a healthy diet, eroding SNAP families' purchasing power. An arbitrary and inflexible federal mandate would require USDA to make unrealistic assumptions about the foods people buy and the time they have to prepare meals. This would push millions of Latinos deeper into food insecurity and poverty, robbing them of the basic dignity of being able to feed their families.

Instead of slashing SNAP benefits, policymakers should strengthen this vital lifeline, ensuring that benefits are adequate to meet the cost of a nutritious diet. The 2021 TFP update was a step in the right direction, but we must go further. SNAP benefits must be raised to a level that reflects the cost of living in this country, considering the latest scientific evidence on nutrition, the realities of food preparation, and the high cost of healthy food. **America's leaders must ensure that people in low-wage jobs can afford to feed their families, which means increasing, not decreasing, SNAP benefits.**

Table 1. People relying on SNAP for food during the average year, by state: 2017-2019

State	Total SNAP participants	Hispanic SNAP participants
Alabama	899,000	72,000
Alaska	116,000	6,000
Arizona	1,130,000	578,000
Arkansas	459,000	40,000
California	5,038,000	2,856,000
Colorado	631,000	238,000
Connecticut	477,000	165,000
Delaware	153,000	23,000
District of Columbia	128,000	9,000
Florida	3,613,000	1,102,000
Georgia	1,729,000	181,000
Hawaii	241,000	36,000
Idaho	214,000	42,000
Illinois	2,078,000	523,000
Indiana	799,000	68,000
Iowa	428,000	56,000
Kansas	303,000	61,000
Kentucky	716,000	34,000
Louisiana	972,000	52,000
Maine	213,000	3,000
Maryland	746,000	107,000
Massachusetts	960,000	310,000
Michigan	1,541,000	88,000
Minnesota	585,000	43,000
Mississippi	626,000	17,000
Missouri	869,000	58,000
Montana	151,000	6,000
Nebraska	226,000	48,000

State	Total SNAP participants	Hispanic SNAP participants
Nevada	537,000	178,000
New Hampshire	110,000	10,000
New Jersey	843,000	243,000
New Mexico	499,000	260,000
New York	3,451,000	1,007,000
North Carolina	1,680,000	203,000
North Dakota	80,000	6,000
Ohio	1,771,000	135,000
Oklahoma	666,000	122,000
Oregon	779,000	163,000
Pennsylvania	2,099,000	334,000
Rhode Island	185,000	62,000
South Carolina	842,000	59,000
South Dakota	109,000	7,000
Tennessee	1,111,000	94,000
Texas	4,313,000	2,318,000
Utah	294,000	42,000
Vermont	89,000	2,000
Virginia	896,000	136,000
Washington	1,165,000	272,000
West Virginia	368,000	9,000
Wisconsin	821,000	75,000
Wyoming	48,000	8,000
National	48,797,000	12,567,000

Source: UnidosUS analysis of estimates from the Urban Institute's [TRIM3 Microsimulation Model](#), Public Use Files. Note: TRIM3 is a microsimulation model maintained by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Urban Institute that corrects for underreporting of SNAP receipt in data from the March Current Population Survey (CPS). These corrections align survey results with targets derived from administrative data, including the demographic characteristics of SNAP enrollees nationwide. State-level alignment does not adjust for demographic characteristics, among other reasons because of limited CPS sample size in many states. Based on USDA's [analysis](#) of SNAP administrative records matched with American Community Survey data for 18 states, our estimates of Latino participation are likely to underestimate such participation in most (though not all) states. To increase the reliability of our estimates for the states that have low CPS sample sizes, we averaged the three most recent years of TRIM3 microsimulation results for every state. Additional information about our methodology is available upon request.

About Us

UnidosUS is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that serves as the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Since 1968, we have challenged the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos through our unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an [Affiliate Network](#) of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico. We believe in an America where economic, political, and social progress is a reality for all Latinos, and we collaborate across communities to achieve it.

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