AMERICAN SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION

# 2026-2027
# Team Policy Debate
# Sourcebook Case 2

**Resolved: The United States Federal Government should significantly reform one or more of the following entitlement programs: Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP, TANF.**

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# Affirmative Case: Refund SNAP

1AC: Refund SNAP

"My mom's cooking is the best. I know everyone may say this, but truly – no one can compete. The flavorful meals I grew up with and that I often shared with friends and family are some of my fondest memories. Wanting to be a great cook like her, I would often watch closely as my mother went grocery shopping. Every item placed into the cart was intentional. I watched as she made precise price calculations and swapped between products. I quickly realized that every meal my mom whipped up came from a shopping trip that felt like Mission Impossible. Growing up, my family relied on SNAP, or 'food stamps.' The benefits were modest, and there were limits to what you can use them on – hence my mom's careful shopping. But despite that, SNAP meant having food on the table – and impressive recipes that brought people together. It meant one less impossible choice at the end of the month. I no longer rely on this vital program that kept my family afloat, but millions of other families do." [1]

This story, shared by Layla Sayed in 2026, explains exactly what the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) means to millions of Americans today. It is because my partner and I believe in protecting the impoverished or underprivileged communities that rely on snap that we stand

**Resolved: The United States Federal Government should significantly reform one or more of the following entitlement programs: Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP, TANF.**

Today, we will be focusing on reforms to SNAP. Before we go into the details of those reforms, there are several key definitions that need to be established, beginning with

[1] Authored by Layla Sayed (Henry A. Wallace Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies). Published by the Institute for Policy Studies (The Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) is an American progressive think tank, formed in 1963 and based in Washington, D.C.). July 8, 2026. *Accessed September 15, 2026. "https://ips-dc.org/snap-cuts-take-more-than-food-away/" SNAP Cuts Take More Than Food Away*

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**Definition 1: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

Morgan Coulson of the Bloomberg School of Public Health at John Hopkins University explain

"SNAP is funded by the federal government via the Farm Bill and administered by the states, which distribute it to eligible residents. Recipients can then spend that money on food and beverages. The money cannot be spent on tobacco, alcohol, nonfood items, or in most cases, prepared foods [such as takeout]. To qualify for benefits, participants must meet certain eligibility standards based on their income, assets, household size, immigration status, and proof of employment. A household's gross monthly income must generally be at or below 130% of the poverty line to be eligible, with the specific amount depending on household size. For example, a three-person household in the 2025 fiscal year had a gross monthly income limit of $2,798. In 2023, about 39% of SNAP participants were children, 20% were elderly, and 10% were nonelderly individuals with a disability." [2]

In simple terms, SNAP is a food assistance program funded by the federal government that provides food credits to vulnerable or impoverished families and individuals. Our second definition is

**Definition 2: One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBB)**

The Cornell Law School's Legal Information Institute explains

"H.R. 1, An Act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to title II of H. Con. Res. 14, Public Law 119-21, also known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBB) was signed into law by President Trump on July 4, 2025. The Act introduced broad changes to the federal tax code, restructured funding for several federal programs, and modified the operations of various federal agencies." [3]

In essence, the OBBB was passed to cut down on government waste and spending. While the overall impacts of the bill are a topic of ongoing debate and discussion, the provisions related to SNAP are not as seen in

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[2] Authored by Morgan Coulson (Editorial associate at the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health). Published by the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (The John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health is the public health graduate school of John Hopkins University, a private research university primarily based in Baltimore, Maryland). October 29, 2025.
*Accessed September 15, 2026. "https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2025/what-is-snap-and-why-does-it-matter" What Is SNAP? And Why Does It Matter?*

[3] No Author Listed. Published by Cornell Law School's Legal Information Institute (The Legal Information Institute (LII) is a non-profit public service of Cornell Law School that provides no-cost access to current American and international legal research sources online). August 2025.
*Accessed September 15, 2026. "https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/One_Big_Beautiful_Bill_Act_OBBB" One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBB)*

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**Fact 1: Significant SNAP Cuts**

For as long as it has existed, SNAP benefits funding has been guaranteed by the United States Federal Government. However, cuts made to SNAP in the OBBB have taken away that guarantee. In 2025, Lauren Bauer, Ph.D. and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach explained for the Brookings Institution that

"For the entirety of its more than 50-year history, SNAP benefits have always been paid in full by the federal government. Starting in October 2027, OBBBA ends this guarantee of full federal funding of SNAP benefits by tying the share of benefits that a state will have to pay for to the state's SNAP payment error rate (PER). Shifting a portion of SNAP benefits onto states is unprecedented and will occur on top of other parts of OBBBA, including its extensive Medicaid cuts, that also shift substantial new costs onto states." [4]

While the policy sounds good on the surface, the reality is anything but pleasant. As we see in

**Harm 1: Millions of SNAP Beneficiaries at Risk**

Millions of vulnerable Americans depend on SNAP for food security. As SNAP faces cuts, widespread food insecurity becomes a very real threat. The Brookings Institution further explains

"In providing an estimate for the effect of pushing a substantial share of SNAP benefit costs onto states, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has concluded that this policy will lead some states to drop out of the program entirely; we agree. States could also take steps to limit enrollment, make significant cuts elsewhere in their budget to make room for more state spending on SNAP, or raise taxes or revenue by other means to be able to afford to remain in the program. Uncertainty year-to-year around the state's PER and program enrollment will make it quite difficult for states to plan and budget." [4]

[4] Authored by Lauren Bauer and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach (Lauren Bauer is a fellow in Economic Studies at the Brookings Institution and the associate director of The Hamilton Project. Bauer holds a BA in History and an MA and PhD in Human Development and Social Policy with a certificate in Education Sciences, all from Northwestern University; Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach is an economist who studies policies aimed at improving the lives of children in poverty, including education, health, and income support policies). Published by the Brookings Institution (American economics and policy think tank). October 8, 2025.
*Accessed September 15, 2026. "https://www.brookings.edu/articles/snap-cuts-in-the-one-big-beautiful-bill-act-will-significantly-impair-recession-response/" SNAP cuts in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act will significantly impair recession response*

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As we can see, there is a high likelihood that states will cut down on or remove SNAP entirely, causing many Americans to become food insecure. Those that do not choose to maintain SNAP at current levels will see cuts in other vital welfare programs. Unfortunately, a significant number of SNAP beneficiaries have already been harmed by these cuts with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities noting that

"In the 25 states with available data, the number of children receiving SNAP food assistance has fallen by about 1.2 million since July 2025. Put another way, children account for close to half of the nearly 2.8 million people who are no longer receiving SNAP in those states." [5]

Millions of individuals that need SNAP benefits are not receiving them. Because of this we need the Affirmative team's

**Plan: Restore SNAP Funding**

**Mandate –** Upon an Affirmative ballot, Congress shall pass and the president shall sign into effect a law repealing all SNAP related provisions contained within H.R. 1 otherwise known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

**Enforcement –** This plan will be enforced by Congress and any other necessary bodies.

**Funding –** The process for funding SNAP will occur through regular appropriations processes as it has always done.

**Timeline –** This plan will go into effect at the beginning of FY 2028.

[5] Authored by Dottie Rosenbaum, Joseph Llobrera, Ph.D., Catlin Nchako, and Luis Nuñez (Dottie Rosenbaum is the Senior Fellow and Director of Federal SNAP Policy on the Food Assistance team; Joseph Llobrera is the Senior Director of Research for the Food Assistance team, where his work highlights the positive impacts of federal nutrition assistance programs on people's health, food security, and economic well-being. Llobrera holds a Ph.D. in Nutrition from the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University; Catlin Nchako joined the Food Assistance Division as a Research Associate in November of 2013. His work focuses on data analysis and research for the food stamp, school meals, and WIC programs; Luis Nuñez is a Research Analyst on the Food Assistance team). Published by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (American budget policy think tank). August 26, 2026.
*Accessed September 17, 2026. "https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-tracker-people-are-losing-food-assistance-as-the-republican-megabill" SNAP Tracker: People Are Losing Food Assistance as the Harmful 2025 Republican Reconciliation Law Is Implemented*


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**Advantage: Increased Food Security**

The individuals and families that receive SNAP are at risk of being food insecure. Ensuring that those people are not cut due to funding constraints will mitigate food insecurity here in the United States. A 2022 study from the American Journal of Public Health found the impacts of SNAP on food security were significant. Its results found that

"Twenty-eight percent of individuals who resided in low-income households during childhood exhibited improved food security status from childhood to adulthood. Those who participated in SNAP and WIC during childhood had 4.16-fold higher odds (95% confidence interval [CI] = 1.91, 9.03) of being more food secure than those who were eligible for but did not receive SNAP or WIC, and those who participated in SNAP alone had 3.28-fold higher odds (95% CI = 1.56, 6.88). Participation in social safety net programs such as SNAP and WIC during childhood helps to improve food security across the life course. Our findings add evidence regarding the long-term benefits of participation in SNAP and WIC during childhood." [6]

SNAP is vital to combating food insecurity. It increases the chances of a family pulling themselves out of food insecurity by a factor of three. Such impacts cannot be ignored, which is why we need to fix SNAP. It is why my partner and I urge you to vote Affirmative.

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[6] Authored by Noura Insolera, Ph.D., Alicia Cohen, M.D., and Julia A. Wolfson, Ph.D. (Noura Insolera is with the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Alicia Cohen is with the Center of Innovation in Long Term Services and Supports, VA Providence Healthcare System; Department of Family Medicine, Alpert Medical School of Brown University; and Department of Health Services, Policy and Practice, School of Public Health, Brown University, Providence, RI; Julia A. Wolfson is with the Department of International Health, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD, and the Department of Health Management and Policy, University of Michigan School of Public Health, Ann Arbor). Published by the American Journal of Public Health (The American Journal of Public Health is a monthly peer-reviewed public health journal that is independently published by the American Public Health Association. The Journal covers health policy and public health). September 14, 2022.
*Accessed September 17, 2026. "https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2022.306967" SNAP and WIC Participation During Childhood and Food Security in Adulthood, 1984–2019*

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# Affirmative Backup: Refund SNAP

## Strategy Guide

The United States has been fighting food insecurity for decades. Despite persistent efforts, recent research estimates that 1 in 7 households remain food insecure (FRAC, 2024). One program intended to counter this problem is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP which provides vulnerable individuals with a small stipend that can only be spent on food products (Coulson, 2025). SNAP has played a vital role in lifting individuals out of poverty and food insecurity (Insolera et al, 2022). However, recent changes made under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act have drastically cut funding – threatening the program's ability to counter food insecurity.

At a surface level, this case seems like common sense. However, there are two important hurdles that the Affirmative team needs to overcome to win the debate. First, the Affirmative team must convince the judge that SNAP is an effective tool for addressing food insecurity. Second, they must demonstrate that recent changes to SNAP negatively impact its ability to function. If the Affirmative can win the judge over on these two points, then the ballot is theirs.

A host of research on SNAP's effectiveness exists. For example, this brief cites the American Journal of Public Health (see Insolera et al, 2022). To use such evidence effectively, a good Affirmative team will carefully define what success looks like for SNAP. Narrowing in on certain SNAP performance indicators can preclude tangential factors that the Negative might present (e.g. whether SNAP recipients are purchasing healthy or unhealthy foods). There are many potential criteria for a successful SNAP program, thus it is recommended that the Affirmative side research where SNAP excels and fails. By steering discussion towards the strengths of SNAP, the Affirmative side can persuade any judge of SNAP's value. Some potential avenues for Affirmative teams to explore include SNAP's effect during economic turmoil, its long-term impacts, and its role in rural communities.

After establishing effectiveness, the Affirmative side must then demonstrate that recent reforms threaten SNAP. While this may seem straightforward, many Affirmative sides will find this to be rather difficult as the particulars become very partisan. The reforms that the Affirmative plan seeks to repeal are part of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBB). This act is strongly supported by the Republican party. While proposing to repeal portions of the OBBB, there is a potential for judges or competitors to have strong feelings regarding the legislation. A good Affirmative team will allow the data to speak for itself and avoid making partisan remarks. The use of specific statistics – paired with an emphasis on the narrow scope of the repeal – should allow the Affirmative side to sidestep any political biases.

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Ultimately, the effectiveness of this case will rely on the Affirmative side's focus and tact. If the Affirmative can center the debate on the key issues and avoid inflammatory remarks, the debate will end with an Affirmative ballot.

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**Definition: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**
Authored by Megan Coulson (Editorial associate at the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health). Published by the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (The John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health is the public health graduate school of John Hopkins University, a private research university primarily based in Baltimore, Maryland). October 29, 2025.
*Accessed September 15, 2026. "https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2025/what-is-snap-and-why-does-it-matter" What is SNAP? And Why Does It Matter?*

"SNAP is funded by the federal government via the Farm Bill and administered by the states, which distribute it to eligible residents. Recipients can then spend that money on food and beverages. The money cannot be spent on tobacco, alcohol, nonfood items, or in most cases, prepared foods [such as takeout]. To qualify for benefits, participants must meet certain eligibility standards based on their income, assets, household size, immigration status, and proof of employment. A household's gross monthly income must generally be at or below 130% of the poverty line to be eligible, with the specific amount depending on household size. For example, a three-person household in the 2025 fiscal year had a gross monthly income limit of $2,798. In 2023, about 39% of SNAP participants were children, 20% were elderly, and 10% were nonelderly individuals with a disability."

**Definition: One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBB)**
No Author Listed. Published by Cornell Law School's Legal Information Institute (The Legal Information Institute (LII) is a non-profit public service of Cornell Law School that provides no-cost access to current American and international legal research sources online). August 2025.
*Accessed September 15, 2026.*
*"https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/One_Big_Beautiful_Bill_Act_OBBB" One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBB)*

"H.R. 1, An Act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to title II of H. Con. Res. 14, Public Law 119-21, also known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBB) was signed into law by President Trump on July 4, 2025. The Act introduced broad changes to the federal tax code, restructured funding for several federal programs, and modified the operations of various federal agencies."

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**US Food Insecurity**

No Author Listed. Published by the Food Research and Action Center (The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) is a leading U.S. nonprofit organization dedicated to ending poverty-related hunger and improving nutrition through research, advocacy, and policy solutions). 2024. *Accessed September 17, 2026. "https://frac.org/hunger-poverty-america" Hunger & Poverty in America*

(**Strategy Note:** This piece of evidence is useful for demonstrating a current need for food assistance programs like SNAP.)

"Overall, about one in 7 households (13.7 percent) experienced food insecurity, or lack of access to an affordable, nutritious diet. An estimated 47.9 million Americans lived in these households. 5.4% of U.S. households (1 in 20) experienced very low food security, a more severe form of food insecurity, where households report regularly skipping meals or reducing intake because they could not afford more food. 14.1 million children lived in households that experienced food insecurity, a slight increase from the 13.8 million children reported in 2023."

**Impact:** While America may seem well-off, there are many who still struggle to afford necessary resources.

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**Significant SNAP Cuts**

Authored by Lauren Bauer and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach (Lauren Bauer is a fellow in Economic Studies at the Brookings Institution and the associate director of The Hamilton Project. Bauer holds a BA in History and an MA and PhD in Human Development and Social Policy with a certificate in Education Sciences, all from Northwestern University; Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach is an economist who studies policies aimed at improving the lives of children in poverty, including education, health, and income support policies). Published by the Brookings Institution (American economics and policy think tank). October 8, 2025. *Accessed September 15, 2026. "https://www.brookings.edu/articles/snap-cuts-in-the-one-big-beautiful-bill-act-will-significantly-impair-recession-response/" SNAP cuts in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act will significantly impair recession response*

"For the entirety of its more than 50-year history, SNAP benefits have always been paid in full by the federal government. Starting in October 2027, OBBBA ends this guarantee of full federal funding of SNAP benefits by tying the share of benefits that a state will have to pay for to the state's SNAP payment error rate (PER). Shifting a portion of SNAP benefits onto states is unprecedented and will occur on top of other parts of OBBBA, including its extensive Medicaid cuts, that also shift substantial new costs onto states."

**Impact:** SNAP has recently seen significant cuts in funding that states are unlikely to be able to cover.

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**Significant SNAP Cuts – Ripple Effects**

Authored by Joseph Llobera, Ph.D. (Joseph Llobrera is the Senior Director of Research for the Food Assistance team, where his work highlights the positive impacts of federal nutrition assistance programs on people's health, food security, and economic well-being. Llobrera holds a Ph.D. in Nutrition from the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University). Published by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (American budget policy think tank). July 21, 2026.
*Accessed September 19, 2026. "https://www.cbpp.org/blog/number-of-children-receiving-snap-continues-to-drop-under-harmful-2025-republican" Number of Children Receiving SNAP Continues to Drop Under Harmful 2025 Republican Reconciliation Law*

"The 2025 Republican reconciliation law's cost shift has led states to take steps that are making it harder for eligible people to receive SNAP, including families with children. Losing SNAP also makes it harder for children in families with low incomes to qualify for other food assistance, such as WIC (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) and free school meals — jeopardizing the short- and long-term health, education, and economic benefits of nutrition programs for our children and society. While cutting SNAP eligibility for children was not a stated target of the Republican reconciliation law's proponents, the cost shift and resulting access barriers are causing serious losses of food assistance for children in households with low incomes."

**Impact:** SNAP cuts have had a ripple effect through our nation's safety net.

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**Vital Food Assistance Dwindling**

Authored by Dottie Rosenbaum, Joseph Llobrera, Ph.D., Catlin Nchako, and Luis Nuñez (Dottie Rosenbaum is the Senior Fellow and Director of Federal SNAP Policy on the Food Assistance team; Joseph Llobrera is the Senior Director of Research for the Food Assistance team, where his work highlights the positive impacts of federal nutrition assistance programs on people's health, food security, and economic well-being. Llobrera holds a Ph.D. in Nutrition from the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University; Catlin Nchako joined the Food Assistance Division as a Research Associate in November of 2013. His work focuses on data analysis and research for the food stamp, school meals, and WIC programs; Luis Nuñez is a Research Analyst on the Food Assistance team). Published by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (American budget policy think tank). August 26, 2026.
*Accessed September 17, 2026. "https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-tracker-people-are-losing-food-assistance-as-the-republican-megabill" SNAP Tracker: People Are Losing Food Assistance as the Harmful 2025 Republican Reconciliation Law Is Implemented*

"In the 25 states with available data, the number of children receiving SNAP food assistance has fallen by about 1.2 million since July 2025. Put another way, children account for close to half of the nearly 2.8 million people who are no longer receiving SNAP in those states."

**Impact:** Since SNAP cuts in 2025, almost 3 million SNAP recipients have been cut.

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**Vital Food Assistance Dwindling – States Cutting SNAP**

Authored by Lauren Bauer and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach (Lauren Bauer is a fellow in Economic Studies at the Brookings Institution and the associate director of The Hamilton Project. Bauer holds a BA in History and an MA and PhD in Human Development and Social Policy with a certificate in Education Sciences, all from Northwestern University; Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach is an economist who studies policies aimed at improving the lives of children in poverty, including education, health, and income support policies). Published by the Brookings Institution (American economics and policy think tank). October 8, 2025. *Accessed September 15, 2026. "https://www.brookings.edu/articles/snap-cuts-in-the-one-big-beautiful-bill-act-will-significantly-impair-recession-response/" SNAP cuts in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act will significantly impair recession response*

"In providing an estimate for the effect of pushing a substantial share of SNAP benefit costs onto states, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has concluded that this policy will lead some states to drop out of the program entirely; we agree. States could also take steps to limit enrollment, make significant cuts elsewhere in their budget to make room for more state spending on SNAP, or raise taxes or revenue by other means to be able to afford to remain in the program. Uncertainty year-to-year around the state's PER and program enrollment will make it quite difficult for states to plan and budget."

**Impact:** While we have already seen significant harms following SNAP cuts, it is likely that the impacts will intensify with several states dropping out of SNAP entirely. This would leave millions of Americans without necessary food assistance.

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**SNAP Benefits Food Security**

Authored by Noura Insolera, Ph.D., Alicia Cohen, M.D., and Julia A. Wolfson, Ph.D. (Noura Insolera is with the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Alicia Cohen is with the Center of Innovation in Long Term Services and Supports, VA Providence Healthcare System; Department of Family Medicine, Alpert Medical School of Brown University; and Department of Health Services, Policy and Practice, School of Public Health, Brown University, Providence, RI; Julia A. Wolfson is with the Department of International Health, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD, and the Department of Health Management and Policy, University of Michigan School of Public Health, Ann Arbor). Published by the American Journal of Public Health (The American Journal of Public Health is a monthly peer-reviewed public health journal that is independently published by the American Public Health Association. The Journal covers health policy and public health). September 14, 2022.

*Accessed September 17, 2026.*

*"https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2022.306967" SNAP and WIC Participation During Childhood and Food Security in Adulthood, 1984–2019*

"Twenty-eight percent of individuals who resided in low-income households during childhood exhibited improved food security status from childhood to adulthood. Those who participated in SNAP and WIC during childhood had 4.16-fold higher odds (95% confidence interval [CI] = 1.91, 9.03) of being more food secure than those who were eligible for but did not receive SNAP or WIC, and those who participated in SNAP alone had 3.28-fold higher odds (95% CI = 1.56, 6.88). Participation in social safety net programs such as SNAP and WIC during childhood helps to improve food security across the life course. Our findings add evidence regarding the long-term benefits of participation in SNAP and WIC during childhood."

**Impact:** SNAP plays a major role in lifting individuals out of food insecurity. The loss of SNAP for these individuals would mean an incredible loss of potential.

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**SNAP Benefits Food Security – Individual Example**

Authored by Layla Sayed (Henry A. Wallace Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies). Published by the Institute for Policy Studies (The Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) is an American progressive think tank, formed in 1963 and based in Washington, D.C.). July 8, 2026. *Accessed August 15, 2026. "https://ips-dc.org/snap-cuts-take-more-than-food-away/" SNAP Cuts Take More Than Food Away*

(**Strategy Note:** This piece of evidence works well as an opener for a speech or as a more concrete example of SNAP's impact on the individual level.)

"My mom's cooking is the best. I know everyone may say this, but truly – no one can compete. The flavorful meals I grew up with and that I often shared with friends and family are some of my fondest memories. Wanting to be a great cook like her, I would often watch closely as my mother went grocery shopping. Every item placed into the cart was intentional. I watched as she made precise price calculations and swapped between products. I quickly realized that every meal my mom whipped up came from a shopping trip that felt like Mission Impossible. Growing up, my family relied on SNAP, or 'food stamps.' The benefits were modest, and there were limits to what you can use them on – hence my mom's careful shopping. But despite that, SNAP meant having food on the table – and impressive recipes that brought people together. It meant one less impossible choice at the end of the month. I no longer rely on this vital program that kept my family afloat, but millions of other families do."

**Impact:** The impacts of SNAP are not imaginary. SNAP has real impacts on real people.

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# Negative Case: Refund SNAP

## Strategy Guide

Welfare programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid face intense public scrutiny. However, some programs are subject to less scrutiny than others. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) formerly known as Food Stamps is one such program. Originally established in response to the Great Depression, SNAP aims to eliminate food insecurity and to improve recipients' nutrition. Unfortunately, the Negative side will face an uphill battle with this case as many judges will be sympathetic to the starving Americans narrative presented by the Affirmative. However, with a careful approach the Negative side can overcome any biases that they encounter.

To overcome any Affirmative biases, the Negative should not focus on disproving the harm. Food insecurity is undeniably a problem in the United States, to argue otherwise would be unwise. Instead, the Negative should demonstrate that SNAP creates a burden on the American taxpayer while failing to achieve its intended results.

There are various avenues that the Negative team can pursue to establish that SNAP is costly. The approach contained in this brief is to argue that significant funds are lost through fraud. While SNAP has an impressively low fraud rate of 1 percent, that figure only accounts for detected fraud (Mayo, 2021). It is likely that SNAP fraud is more prevalent than it appears with some estimating fraud rates up to 15 percent. A good Negative will break down to the judge that a significant amount of money is lost to administrative costs, fraud, and theft before it ever even reaches the beneficiaries – meaning most of SNAP's funding never reaches the people it is meant to help. By establishing this line of thought, most judges will require the Affirmative to demonstrate substantial benefit to justify the cost. However, this creates an opportunity for the Negative.

While there is substantial literature on the benefits of SNAP, there are also many sources that dispute claims of SNAP's success. One example given by Chris Edwards (2023) of the Cato Institute is that SNAP fails to improve nutrition. Despite being a goal of the program, Edwards found that SNAP recipients purchased fewer healthy foods than low-income nonrecipients. These findings are consistent with Nathan Mayo's (2021) findings that SNAP recipients use their benefits to purchase junk food. By portraying this example as a failure of the SNAP program, the Negative will be able to argue that the cost of SNAP is not justified.

Success with this case will be dependent on the Negative team's ability to chain arguments together. Any one argument by itself will fail to overcome the Affirmative team's plan; however, several well-connected arguments will allow the Negative to easily overcome the Affirmative team.

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**SNAP Fraught with Fraud**

No Author Listed. Published by the US Government Accountability Office (The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) is a federal agency within the legislative branch of the United States government that provides auditing, evaluative, and investigative services for the United States Congress in an independent and nonpartisan capacity). September 26, 2024. *Accessed September 19, 2026. "https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-24-107461.pdf" Improper Payments: USDA's Oversight of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.*

"The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the largest federally funded nutrition assistance program. In June 2024, USDA reported that an estimated 11.7 percent (or about $10.5 billion of $90.1 billion in outlays not including disaster benefits, such as emergency allotments from the pandemic) of SNAP benefits paid in fiscal year 2023 were improper. This was an increase from the prior year estimate of 11.5 percent (or about $8.8 billion of $76.0 billion in outlays not including disaster benefits, such as emergency allotments from the pandemic) as reported on PaymentAccuracy.gov."

**Impact:** Over 10% of the payments made by SNAP should not have been made. It would be unwise to expand the funding for a program that has already demonstrated poor fiscal accountability.

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**SNAP Fraught with Fraud – Fraud Underreported**

Authored by Nathan Mayo (Nathan Mayo is the VP of Programs for True Charity, which exists to champion a resurgence of civil society in the fight against poverty). Published by the Foundation for Economic Education (American conservative, libertarian economic think tank). November 12, 2021.

*Accessed September 21, 2026. "https://fee.org/articles/snap-the-uncomfortable-truths-about-the-food-stamp-program/" SNAP: The Uncomfortable Truths about the Food Stamp Program*

"Additionally, while SNAP is often lauded for its miniscule fraud rates of only around 1 percent, this figure only counts detected fraud. A higher rate seems more sensible to people who regularly work with SNAP recipients. A few weeks ago, I spoke to a young man in a stable situation who drew SNAP benefits and gave the card to his ineligible mother. In his defensive words, "everyone I know is doing it." If SNAP investigators are similar to IRS investigators, it is safe to say that they do not detect all fraud. The IRS estimates that they uncover a mere 6 percent of all tax fraud ($60 billion recovered of up to $1 trillion in evasion). If the same detection rate holds for SNAP, that would equate to a fraud rate of 15 percent. In addition to eligibility fraud, SNAP cards or groceries are regularly resold to others. Reports across the nation confirm that the going rate for this type of fraud is 50 cents on the dollar—including Massachusetts, Michigan, Georgia. This discounted rate points out that SNAP benefits cost twice as much to taxpayers as they are worth to many recipients."

**Impact:** While SNAP may seem like an ideal program, the truth is that various forms of fraud are prevalent in the program. This fraud results in an added burden to taxpayers.

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**Poor Oversight of SNAP**

No Author Listed. Published by the US Government Accountability Office (The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) is a federal agency within the legislative branch of the United States government that provides auditing, evaluative, and investigative services for the United States Congress in an independent and nonpartisan capacity). September 26, 2024. *Accessed September 19, 2026. "https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-24-107461.pdf" Improper Payments: USDA's Oversight of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.*

"According to information that USDA reported on PaymentAccuracy.gov, in fiscal year 2023 states made improper payments related to SNAP mainly because they did not verify recipients' eligibility for program benefits. For example, states did not always verify certain program eligibility requirements, including: Citizenship. Recipient is a U.S. citizen through birth or naturalization, or is a lawfully present non-citizen. Education. Education level or enrollment status of a student recipient. Employment. Employment status of a recipient. Finances. Financial position or status of a recipient, applicant, or their family. Household size. Number of family members in a household. Identity. Recipient is who they claim to be. Residency. Status of recipient's living location or arrangement."

**Impact:** While SNAP is intended to help the truly needy, without proper oversight it becomes a liability. Currently, large amounts of improper payments are made because of a systemic failure to verify information.

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**Poor Oversight of SNAP – Failure to Verify Data**

No Author Listed. Published by PaymentAccuracy.gov (PaymentAccuracy.gov is an official U.S. government website that OMB manages. It contains information, including current and historical estimated improper payment rates (i.e., agency reported improper payment amounts as a percentage of outlays), amounts of estimated improper payments, root causes of monetary loss and improper payments, and monetary-loss recovery efforts). 2026.
*Accessed September 19, 2026. "https://paymentaccuracy.gov/program/usda-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program" Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Program level Payment Integrity results.*

**Overpayment amount by cause** —

| Overpayment root cause | Overpayment amount |
|---|---|
| **Amount of overpayments within the agency's control** | **$0.0 M** |
| **Amount of overpayments outside the agency's control** | **$8,662.05 M** |
| Amount of overpayments that occurred because the data/information needed to validate payment accuracy prior to making a payment does not exist | $0.0 M |
| Amount of overpayments that occurred because of an inability to access the data/information needed to validate payment accuracy prior to making a payment | $0.0 M |
| Amount of overpayments that occurred because of a failure to access data/information needed to validate payment accuracy prior to making a payment | $8,662.05 M |

**Impact:** A breakdown of improper payments provided by PaymentAccuracy.gov revealed that the primary driver of improper payments is a failure to verify recipients' eligibility.

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**SNAP Encourages Poor Purchasing Behaviors**

Authored by Nathan Mayo (Nathan Mayo is the VP of Programs for True Charity, which exists to champion a resurgence of civil society in the fight against poverty). Published by the Foundation for Economic Education (American conservative, libertarian economic think tank). November 12, 2021.

*Accessed September 21, 2026. "https://fee.org/articles/snap-the-uncomfortable-truths-about-the-food-stamp-program/" SNAP: The Uncomfortable Truths about the Food Stamp Program*

"A less savory contributor to this poor nutrition may be that SNAP encourages unhealthy purchases through the "house money" effect. When gamblers win money, they are less careful with their winnings since they view the "house money" as more disposable than their own cash. Similarly, when people receive SNAP dollars, they are sometimes less careful about their purchases than they would be with their hard-earned dollars. In my role working with poverty-focused nonprofits, I recently came across a woman who recounted how she helped her housemate apply for SNAP and proceeded to help her spend all of their new "fun money" on bags full of candy, soda, and snack cakes."

**Impact:** SNAP does not help pull individuals out of food insecurity. Instead, it encourages unhealthy purchasing behaviors that risk keeping the individual food insecure.

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**US Obesity Epidemic**

No Author Listed. Published by the American Heart Association (The American Heart Association (AHA) is a nonprofit organization in the United States that funds cardiovascular medical research, educates consumers on healthy living and fosters appropriate cardiac care in an effort to reduce disability and deaths caused by cardiovascular disease and stroke). July 7, 2026. *Accessed September 21, 2026. "https://newsroom.heart.org/news/obesity-rates-in-the-u-s-climbed-to-about-40-of-adults-and-20-of-youth-in-2023" Obesity rates in the U.S. climbed to about 40% of adults and 20% of youth in 2023*

"Obesity rates among U.S. adults and children rose sharply in recent years and by 2023, 40% of adults and 20% of youth met the criteria for obesity, according to new, independent research published today in the American Heart Association's flagship journal Circulation. "Obesity is a leading public health concern, linked to higher risks for cardiovascular disease and premature death," said study author Anum Minhas, M.D., M.H.S., an assistant professor of medicine in cardiology at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore. "Examining national trends in obesity can help determine which segments of the population may benefit the most from screening, how resources should be allocated for preventive efforts and the potential impact of implementing public health initiatives to reduce the burden of obesity." Minhas said the research is believed to be the most contemporary evaluation of obesity trends among U.S. adults and youth."

**Impact:** The United States is currently facing a severe obesity epidemic. Anything that risks exacerbating it should receive careful consideration before any expansion.

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**US Obesity Epidemic – SNAP's Contribution**

Authored by Chris Edwards (Chris Edwards occupies the Kilts Family Chair in Fiscal Studies at the Cato Institute). Published by the Cato Institute (American libertarian think tank). September 1, 2023.

*Accessed September 21, 2026. "https://www.cato.org/briefing-paper/snap-high-costs-low-nutrition" SNAP: High Costs, Low Nutrition*

"SNAP—also called the food stamp program—is supposed to support healthy diets for low-income households. But, on average, SNAP's 42 million recipients have less healthy diets and are more obese than other Americans, including low-income Americans not on SNAP. Almost one-quarter of food purchases by SNAP households are for junk food, which contradicts extensive federal efforts to promote healthy diets. Unlike when Congress created food stamps in the 1960s, the more important nutrition-related problems facing low-income individuals today are poor diet choices and high levels of obesity rather than hunger. SNAP's approach of subsidizing total caloric intake is outdated, and the program's top-down structure prevents states from exploring better policies for low-income nutrition. SNAP is failing on nutrition, and it imposes large costs on taxpayers and the economy. It has high administrative costs and attracts substantial fraud and abuse. The states have little incentive to run the program efficiently because Washington is paying the bills."

**Impact:** The approach that SNAP takes for addressing food insecurity is ill-suited to our day. Furthermore, it inhibits any advancements in food insecurity at the taxpayers' expense.

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**SNAP Decreases Nutrition**

Authored by Nathan Mayo (Nathan Mayo is the VP of Programs for True Charity, which exists to champion a resurgence of civil society in the fight against poverty). Published by the Foundation for Economic Education (American conservative, libertarian economic think tank). November 12, 2021.

*Accessed September 21, 2026. "https://fee.org/articles/snap-the-uncomfortable-truths-about-the-food-stamp-program/" SNAP: The Uncomfortable Truths about the Food Stamp Program*

"Government researchers determined that average SNAP recipients increase their food expenditure by only 30 percent of the value of their benefits. In other words, a person previously spending $300 on food a month who qualifies for $100 of food stamp benefits will start spending $330 on food and shift the $70 from his existing budget to other purposes. This surprisingly low percentage suggests that food is not recipients' top priority, as people who were in dire need of food would be expected to boost their food budget by the full value of the benefits. What of the hope that needy families will buy nutritious food? According to a study of a major retailer, recipients spend about 20 percent of their total grocery budget on junk food, with soft drinks as the top purchase—enough to supply a family of four with 20 two-liters of soda per month. Given the marginal amount of SNAP spent on food and the typical benefits for a family, SNAP literally expands the grocery budget by the exact amount needed to cover the junk food. SNAP recipients also spend about 27 percent less on fruits and vegetables than non-SNAP households."

**Impact:** Despite its aim to improve nutrition in vulnerable communities, SNAP actually achieves the opposite. It decreases nutrition by subsidizing junk foods.

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