



AFSCME URGES THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO REJECT PROPOSED SNAP CUTS

Republican leaders in the U.S. House of Representatives are preparing to send legislation to the House floor that would make devastating cuts in federal food assistance to lower income Americans by cutting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) spending in half. It would eliminate food assistance for 4 to 6 million seniors, disabled individuals, and unemployed and low-wage workers and their families. AFSCME strongly opposes this legislation and urges a “NO” vote on it.

Background

Last summer, the U.S. House of Representatives considered a farm bill which included a \$20.5 billion cut in SNAP benefits. A majority of House Democrats opposed those cuts, but Tea Party Republicans were not satisfied. They succeeded in passing an amendment by Representative Steve Southerland (R-FL) that made even deeper cuts.

Adoption of the Southerland amendment caused some Democrats who previously had been reluctantly willing to support the bill to oppose it. In the end, 172 Democrats and 62 Republicans voted against the farm bill leading to a surprising defeat of the bill. In reaction, House Republican leaders dropped the SNAP provisions from the farm bill and passed it, promising that they would take SNAP legislation to the House floor in September.

Proposed SNAP Legislation

The office of House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) now has released a description of the legislation they are preparing for the House floor. The new package would double the SNAP cuts that were proposed in the original House farm bill.

Two of the most damaging provisions would lead to millions of people being denied SNAP benefits largely because they cannot find enough work in a weak economy.

The first would offer federal financial incentives to states to require parents with children to work or participate in a training program for at least 20 hours a week and as much as 30 hours a week. However, there is no provision to create training programs or jobs when jobs are scarce or part-time employment does not offer enough hours.

The other provision would cancel current federal policies that allow adults without children to receive SNAP benefits for more than three months if unemployment is very high where they live. This proposal

alone would cause between 2 to 4 million poor jobless individuals to lose food assistance even though they want to work but can't find a job.

The plan released by Majority Leader Cantor retains other provisions in the original House bill that would cause approximately 2.6 million people in low-income households to lose food assistance. They would particularly hurt low-wage working families and some low-income seniors.

The Cantor Plan Should be Voted Down

If enacted into law, these cuts would come on top of an across-the-board SNAP benefit cut scheduled to go into effect this fall that would reduce food assistance to 47 million Americans, including 22 million children. With anemic job growth, stagnating or declining wages and growing inequality, denying millions of Americans the modest assistance they do receive is absolutely the wrong thing to do.

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