



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Legislative Issue Brief
2015 General Assembly Session

Our Vision

A world where people of all faiths cooperate to create compassionate communities that are just, peaceful, equitable and sustainable.

Our Mission

To empower Virginians to create social justice for all by advocating for systemic change.

Our Work

We unite people of faith in Virginia. Through partnerships with other statewide non-profit advocacy organizations and our own grassroots networks, we empower faithful advocates to:

- LEARN -
about the issues
challenging our communities

- PRAY -
for guidance and
discernment

- ACT -
to make Virginia a more just
and compassionate
Commonwealth.

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In 2010, more than 1 in 5 Virginian families with children struggled to put food on the table. This takes a tremendous toll on families and children, increasing their likelihood of illness and decreasing their ability to perform at work and in school. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a win-win that has resulted in people with low incomes getting the support they need to feed their families, while farmers, food producers and grocers benefit from the boost in business when times are tight. The program tracks closely with poverty, so when people's incomes go down, they are eligible for greater access to the SNAP program. When poverty increases because of economic difficulties, SNAP helps make sure that hunger doesn't keep pace.

The SNAP program, along with other important anti-poverty efforts, is often under attack. Some claim that block grants to states would contain spending when most likely it would force dramatic cuts in needed benefits. New restrictions in the Farm Bill do nothing to improve the program and decrease the states' right to flexibility in administering the program. The Center remains opposed to block grants that cut services and support for people in need.

The Facts

- 83% of all SNAP benefits go to households including children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.¹
- All SNAP households have a net income at or below the poverty line. 91% of all benefits are received by the 83% of SNAP households with a gross income at or below the poverty line.²
- SNAP benefits don't last most participants the whole month. 90% of SNAP benefits are redeemed by the third week of the month, and 58% of people receiving SNAP benefits turn to food banks for assistance for at least half of each year.³ Since the recession, food banks have documented a 40% rise in need.⁴
- The Farm Bill cut the average monthly SNAP benefit from less than \$1.50 to less than \$1.31 per person, per meal.⁵ In Virginia, it takes \$2.68 to feed a person one meal.⁶
- Over 40% of people who are food insecure are not eligible for SNAP under current rules.⁷
- The Farm Bill has caused 2 million low-income people to lose SNAP benefits and 210,000 children to lose free school meals.⁸ In Virginia, it has disqualified almost 50,000 people from nutritional support.⁹
- SNAP participation does not fully respond to unemployment changes. Unemployment increased by 94% from 2007 to 2011, but SNAP participation grew by 70%.¹⁰
- Over 1 in 9 Virginians participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in 2013. Not all of those eligible applied.¹¹
- The federal Farm Bill cut \$8.6 billion in SNAP benefits, further decreasing the already insufficient nutritional support available to impoverished families.¹² Virginia, alone, needs a funding increase of \$406,935,780 to meet its residents' food needs.¹³



1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10 <http://feedingamerica.org/how-we-fight-hunger/programs-and-services/public-assistance-programs/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program/snap-myths-realities.aspx>
 4, 6, 11, 13 <http://vafoodbanks.org/about-hunger/va-hunger-facts/>
 12 <http://frac.org/leg-act-center/farm-bill-2012>



SNAP Talking Points

2015 General Assembly Session

Meeting with your legislator

- **Explain** your perspective on SNAP.
- **Share** a story how restoring SNAP would benefit people in your congregation or community.
- **Advocate** using the talking points below, for how restoring SNAP would benefit all Virginians. Present 3-5 data points from the list below that you find most persuasive.
- **Ask** that your representative take action on the policy issue and ask for a commitment.

The case for restoring SNAP

- *SNAP is a vital program for families and the economy.*
 - 83% of all SNAP benefits directly affect the well-being of children, older adults, and people with disabilities.
 - All SNAP households have a net income at or below the poverty line. 91% of all benefits go to households with a gross income at or below the poverty line. Well over half of SNAP households have gross income at or below 75% of the poverty line.
 - Inability to regularly purchase groceries is a suspected cause of food deserts--geographic areas where people are unable to access grocery stores.
- *SNAP is not enough.*
 - SNAP benefits don't last most participants the whole month. 90% of SNAP benefits are redeemed by the third week of the month, and 58% of people currently receiving SNAP benefits turn to food banks for assistance for at least half of each year.
 - 43% of food insecure individuals are ineligible for SNAP.
 - SNAP participation does not fully respond to unemployment changes. Unemployment increased by 94% from 2007 to 2011, but SNAP participation grew by 70%.
 - Food banks are stretched thin. Since the 2009 recession, demand for food has increased by 40% while donation has fallen about 50%.
- *Farm Bill cuts to SNAP are devastating to families.*
 - The Farm Bill has caused 2 million low-income people to lose SNAP benefits and 210,000 children to lose free school meals. In Virginia, it has disqualified almost 50,000 people from the program.
 - Under the Farm Bill, the average monthly SNAP benefit was cut from less than \$1.50 to less than \$1.40 per meal, per person. The average meal in Virginia costs \$2.68 per meal, per person.
- *Tell a story that illustrates your message and the impact of the issue. Ideally, use an example from the legislator's district.*

The Ask

[As a person of faith,] I believe that all people should be able to [eat the fruit of the Earth OR given their daily bread].

Representative _____, I ask you to support restoring SNAP to help keep America's families healthy.