



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE
CHAIRMAN GT THOMPSON

RENEWING THE AMERICAN DREAM: PRIORITIZING WORK IN SNAP

NEED FOR CHANGE:

Despite a time limit and work requirement enshrined in law for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) on SNAP, **only 28 percent of these individuals have earned income from work.**¹ USDA and States have intentionally limited enforcement of the SNAP work requirement for ABAWDs through waivers, **leaving 40 percent of these work-ready individuals today under a waiver of the ABAWD work requirement**, remaining on the SNAP rolls long after the three-month time limit.

These are able-bodied Americans that we need to work, especially when there are more than seven million open jobs across the country. While it is critical families have access to food, it is equally critical work capable households are encouraged to make more responsible choices. There is dignity in work- it provides more than just a paycheck- and ensures more families and communities can thrive.

Public polling also shows bipartisan majorities of Americans think those that can work should work to receive government benefits.² **Congress must act to restore integrity to work requirements in SNAP.**

REFORMS:

a. Modernizing the SNAP Work Requirement

Under current law, SNAP's time limit and subsequent work requirement for able-bodied adult individuals without dependents (ABAWDs) applies to individuals aged 18-54, and there is an exemption for any individual taking care of a dependent child under the age of 18 in the household. **This reconciliation text makes several updates to the SNAP work requirement to reflect the modern economy and the growing academic evidence that growing up around adults who work is crucial for a child's shot at upward mobility**³. The text increases the age limit subject to the ABAWD work requirement through the age of 64 and exempts only individuals caring for a dependent child under the age of seven. The text maintains the Fiscal Responsibility Act exemptions from the ABAWD work requirement for the homeless, veterans, and individuals aging out of foster care. These provisions will continue to sunset on October

¹ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/research/snap/characteristics-fy22>

² <https://today.yougov.com/politics/articles/45187-americans-evaluate-social-security-medicare-poll>

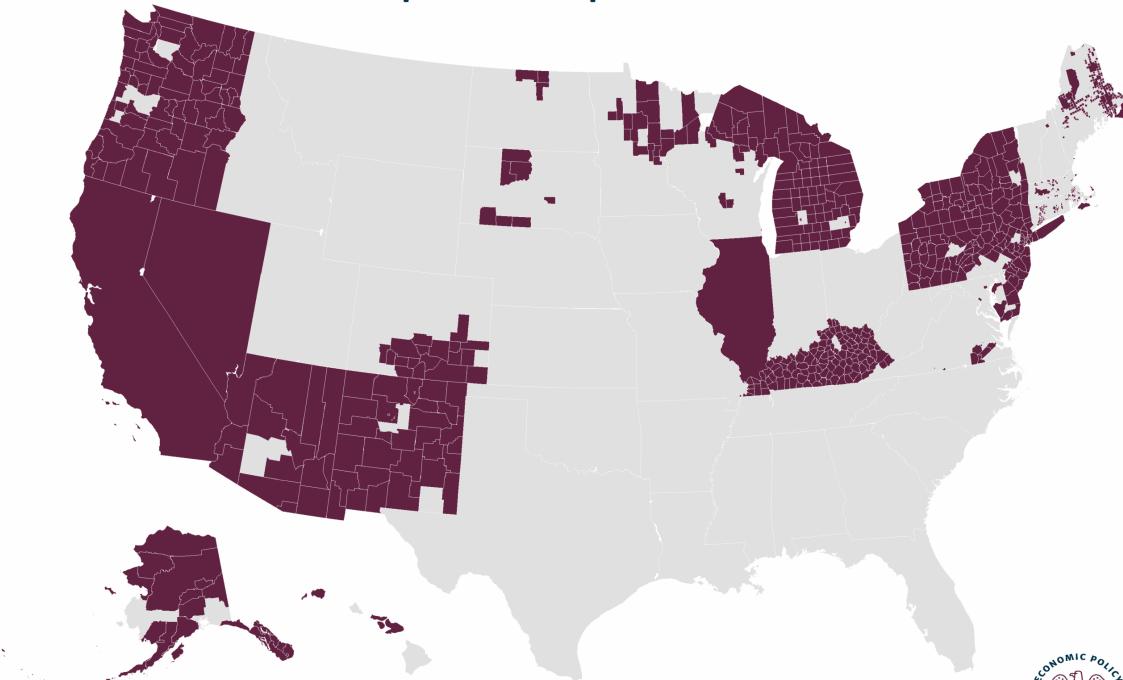
³ <https://opportunityinsights.org/paper/changingopportunity/>

1, 2030. The text also maintains all current exemptions from the SNAP work requirement, including, but not limited to, taking care of an incapacitated person of any age, being pregnant, or participating in job training or a drug or alcohol treatment program.⁴

b. Closing Loopholes that Water Down the SNAP Work Requirement

Under current law, States may request, and the Secretary may approve, waivers from the ABAWD work requirement for any “area” that has an unemployment rate of over 10 percent or that does not have “a sufficient number of jobs to provide employment for individuals.”⁵ **The lack of a statutory definition for area has allowed States to gerrymander and maximize waivers in good economic times.** This text defines “area” as county or county equivalents. **Moreover, the USDA has defined a lack of sufficient jobs through regulation in a way that maximizes waiver approvals in good economic times.** This text would strike the sufficient number of jobs criteria entirely, allowing the Secretary the option to approve waivers only in county or county equivalents with an unemployment rate of over 10 percent.

Food Stamp Work Requirements Waived



Highlighted areas show approved geographic waivers of the Food Stamp work requirement for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) in FY 2025 Q3. Certain Indian Reservations are not shown. Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture.



⁴ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/work-requirements>

⁵ <https://epicforamerica.org/federal-budget/work-requirements-not-workarounds-ending-food-stamp-waiver-abuse/>

