



# HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE – DEMOCRATS

September 16, 2013

## Republican Nutrition Cuts

### Cutting Benefits to Millions

The Republican Nutrition Reform and Work Opportunity Act (H.R. 3102) **cuts \$40 billion** from nutrition assistance programs, **denying SNAP benefits to at least four million low-income Americans.**

**Out of work adults, so-called “Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents” or ABAWDs, with an average income of just \$2,500/year would immediately lose benefits.** These include veterans, Native Americans and those living in urban, rural and suburban areas with chronically high unemployment.

### Nutrition and the Farm Bill

The proposal includes the “poison pill” amendments that led to the defeat of the bipartisan farm bill in June:

- Southerland Amendment providing incentives for states to cut SNAP participation;
- Reed Amendment establishing a lifetime ban for convicted felons who have paid their debt to society; and
- Hudson Amendment instituting mandatory and costly drug testing for all participants.

There is no reason to consider this bill. The House “farm only” bill (H.R. 2642) can be conferenced with the Senate farm bill (S.954). **H.R. 3102 only further delays and potentially derails efforts to pass a new farm bill.**

A broad coalition of 532 agriculture, conservation, rural development, finance, forestry, energy and crop insurance groups have expressed their opposition to separating the nutrition programs from the farm bill. H.R. 3102 ignores their expert input and effectively ends the alliance needed to pass farm and food legislation.

### Unreasonable and Irresponsible

#### Eliminates Benefits for Out of Work Adults in High Unemployment Areas

- Under current law, adults between the ages of 18-50, who are not disabled or caring for children, are limited to three months of SNAP out of every three years unless they are meeting a 20 hour/week work requirement or participating in a workfare or job training program. **During times of high unemployment, states can choose to request to waive this limitation.**
- Waivers are granted only at the request of the states. **States are under no requirement to apply for a waiver and may choose to opt out in the future.** Waivers have been requested by both Republican and Democratic Governors; a majority of Republican Governors have asked to waive current work requirements.
- H.R. 3102 would eliminate USDA’s ability to waive ABAWD work limits, **imposing these work requirements with no regard for real world economic conditions and immediately cutting off food assistance for those in chronically high unemployment areas.** This eliminates the safety net for those who want to work but cannot find a job.

### **Provides States with Financial Incentives to Cut SNAP Participation (Southerland Amendment)**

- Under current law, states may require that recipients search for work, accept job offers and participate in other employment and training programs. Adults caring for young children, those unable to work due to illness or injury and veterans receiving disability compensation are exempt from these requirements.
- H.R. 3102 removes these exemptions, forcing most SNAP participants to work or participate in a work training program for at least 20 hours a week or lose benefits. **There is no support for SNAP recipients to find jobs or participate in work programs and there is no reporting requirement to hold states accountable.**
- H.R. 3102 incentivizes states to cut SNAP participation. The bill creates a slush fund for states by allowing them to pocket half of the federal savings, or money that would otherwise go to SNAP. **States could use this money for anything they want.**
- States that are currently using both public and private funding for innovative employment and training programs, which actually put people to work, would be forced to participate in the Southerland scheme or lose much-needed matching federal support. California, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas and Washington would be hit hardest.

### **Makes Program Delivery More Difficult**

- Welfare reforms enacted in 1996 give states an option to simplify administering social service programs. “Categorical Eligibility” permits states to harmonize the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant income guidelines with SNAP, permitting states to make TANF recipients “categorically eligible” for SNAP.
- **H.R. 3102 would make it more difficult to administer benefits** by restricting categorical eligibility to only those SNAP recipients who receive cash, not just service, from TANF or other general assistance programs.
- Because SNAP benefits are income-based – the higher the income, the lower the benefit – it is possible to be categorically eligible but receive no SNAP benefits. **Participants must still meet SNAP requirements to receive benefits.**

## **Practical Reforms are Possible**

The Senate farm bill (S.954) makes practical and reasonable reforms to the SNAP program:

- Cuts down on trafficking;
- Prevents lottery winners from receiving food assistance;
- Prevents college students from misusing benefits;
- Improves the quality of participating retail stores; and
- Closes gap in standard utility allowance by setting LIHEAP minimum payment.