

COMM 215
CURRENT EVENT
PROJECT



THE LOSS OF SNAP

CURRENT EVENT



A GOVERNMENT SHUT DOWN IS WHEN CONGRESS OR THE PRESIDENT FAIL TO AGREE ON A SPENDING BILL OR SPENDING MEASURE BEFORE A DEADLINE.

SNAP (THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM) IS THE U.S. FEDERAL FOOD-ASSISTANCE PROGRAM THAT HELPS LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES BUY FOOD. IT IS OFTEN REFERRED TO AS "FOOD STAMPS,"

ON OCTOBER 1ST 2025, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ENTERED A SHUTDOWN AFTER LAWMAKERS FAILED TO PASS A FUNDING BILL. A MAJOR SOURCE OF CONFLICT WAS SNAP IN THE BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS.

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION HAD INTRODUCED SWEEPING ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES TO SNAP, REQUIRING MILLIONS OF RECIPIENTS TO REAPPLY FOR BENEFITS UNDER NEW IDENTITY VERIFICATION RULES. THESE CHANGES WERE PART OF A BROADER PUSH TO "CLEAN UP" THE PROGRAM BUT RESULTED IN SIGNIFICANT DELAYS, CONFUSION, AND THE REMOVAL OF LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE FROM THE ASSISTANCE ROLLS, MANY OF WHOM WERE STILL ELIGIBLE.

THE SHUTDOWN INTENSIFIED THESE ISSUES. USDA COULD NOT RELEASE NEW ROUNDS OF FUNDING WITHOUT CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL, PUTTING FOOD ASSISTANCE FOR MORE THAN 40 MILLION AMERICANS AT RISK. COURTS ULTIMATELY RULED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION COULD NOT WITHHOLD SNAP PAYMENTS DURING THE SHUTDOWN, FORCING THE GOVERNMENT TO TEMPORARILY CONTINUE ISSUING BENEFITS.

CURRENT EVENT

DUE TO THE SHUTDOWN FAMILIES WERE FACING IMMEDIATE HUNGER, GROCERY STORES PREPARED FOR DECREASED SPENDING, AND STATES SCRAMBLED TO COVER ADMINISTRATIVE GAPS. SNAP BECAME A BARGAINING CHIP IN A MUCH LARGER FIGHT ABOUT FEDERAL SPENDING AND WELFARE REFORM.

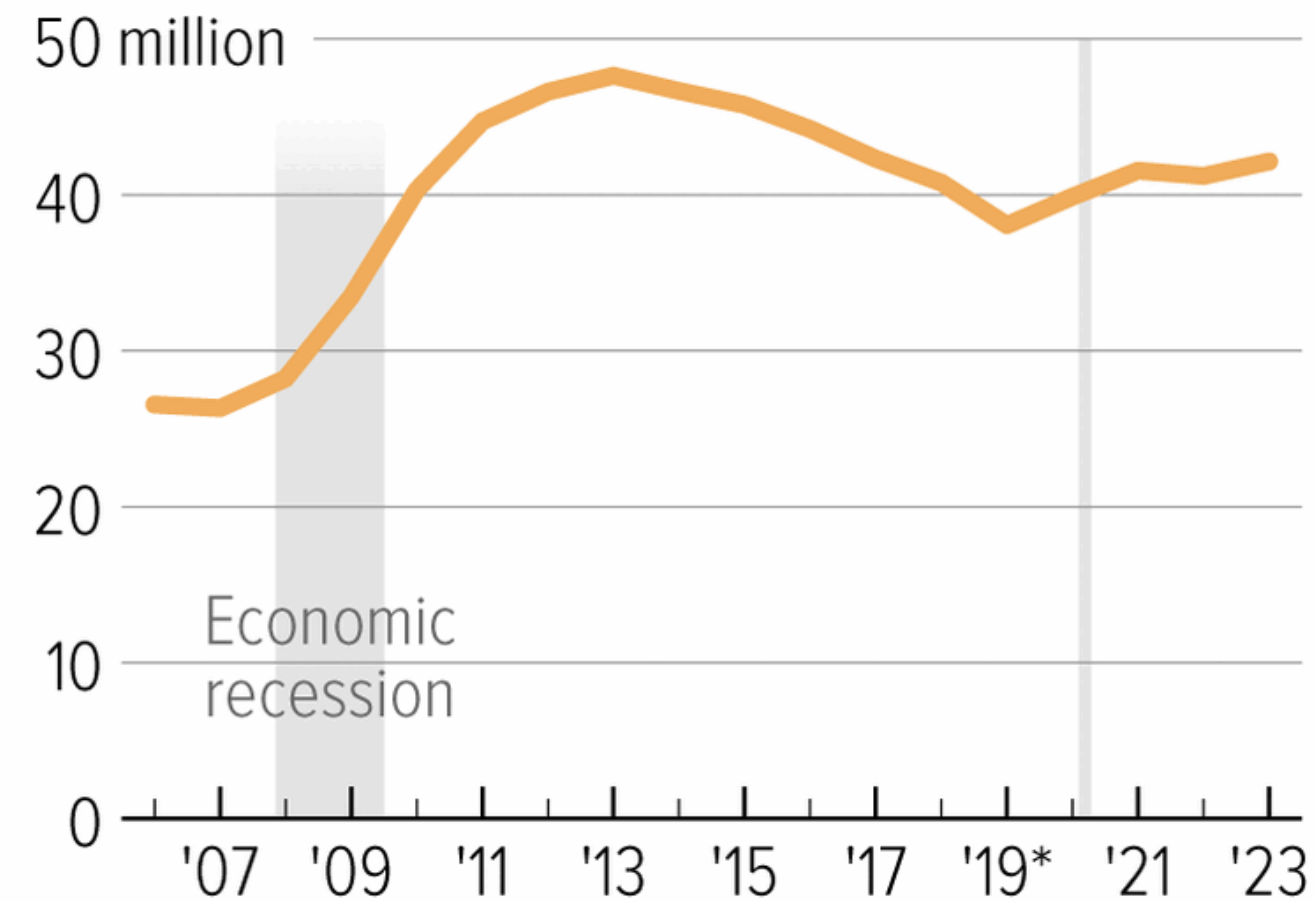
OVERALL, SNAP WAS AT THE CENTER OF THE SHUTDOWN BECAUSE IT IS ONE OF THE LARGEST FEDERAL SAFETY-NET PROGRAMS, IT REQUIRES ANNUAL FEDERAL FUNDING, AND THE ADMINISTRATION'S NEW POLICIES CREATED INSTABILITY JUST AS GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS HALTED

NOW THAT THE SHUTDOWN IS OVER, FAMILIES ARE STILL STRUGGLING. WITH NEW REGULATIONS ON SNAP BENEFITS MILLIONS OF AMERICANS WILL STILL LOSE THEIR ACCESS TO FOOD. CITIES LIKE CHICAGO, NEW YORK, AND LA ARE FACING MASS AMOUNTS OF FOOD INSECURITY DUE TO RECENT EVENTS. FOOD BANKS ARE RUNNING OUT OF FOOD, AND SOUP KITCHENS ARE SEEING LARGER NUMBERS THAN EVER.



SNAP Participation Rose in Pandemic, Reversing Earlier Decline

Participants in average month, fiscal year

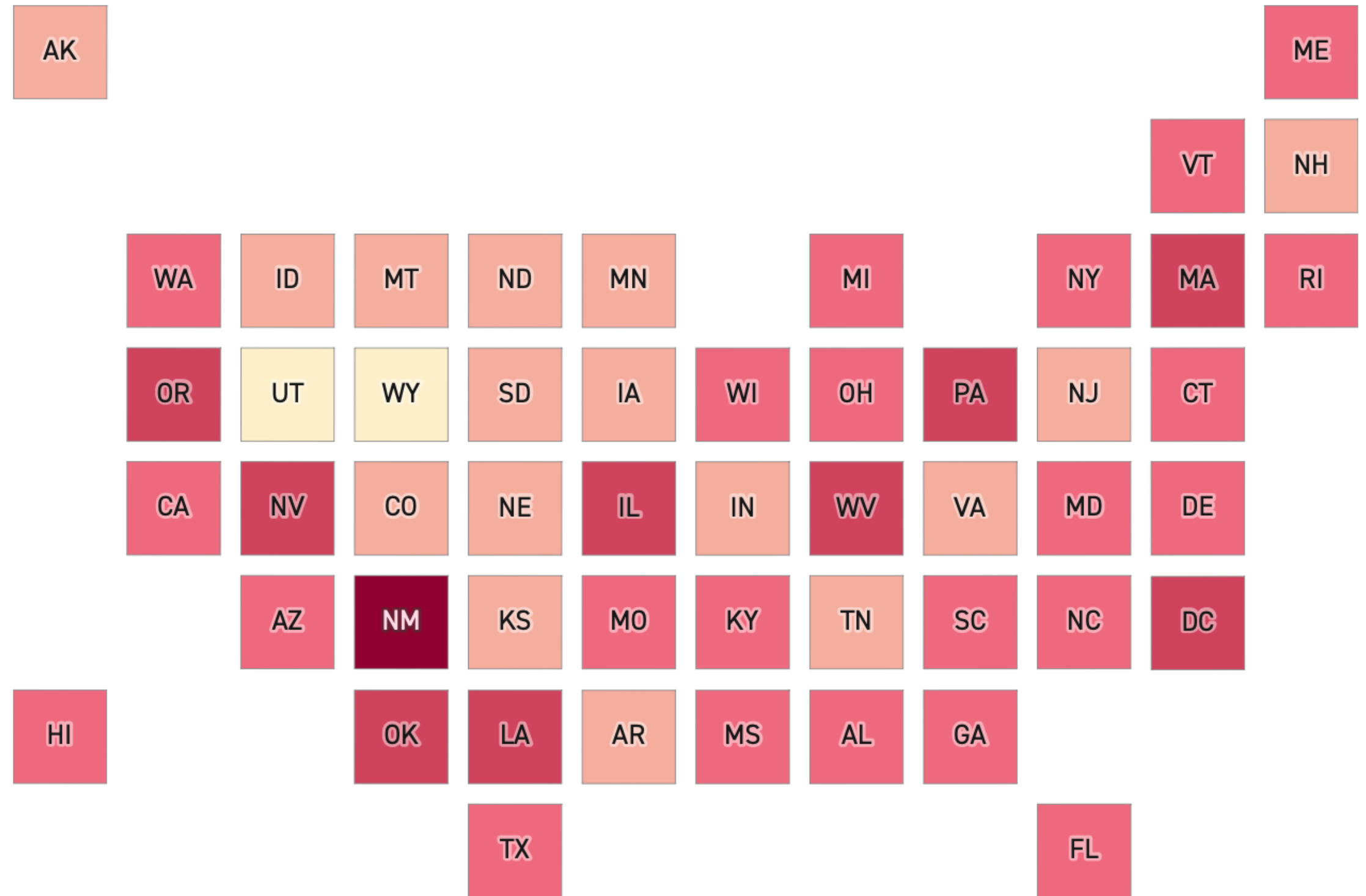
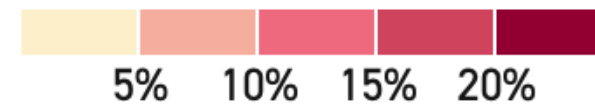


*USDA data adjusted for early issuance of February 2019 benefits in January 2019 due to government shutdown.

Source: Department of Agriculture

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Percentage of state population in fiscal 2024 that received SNAP benefits



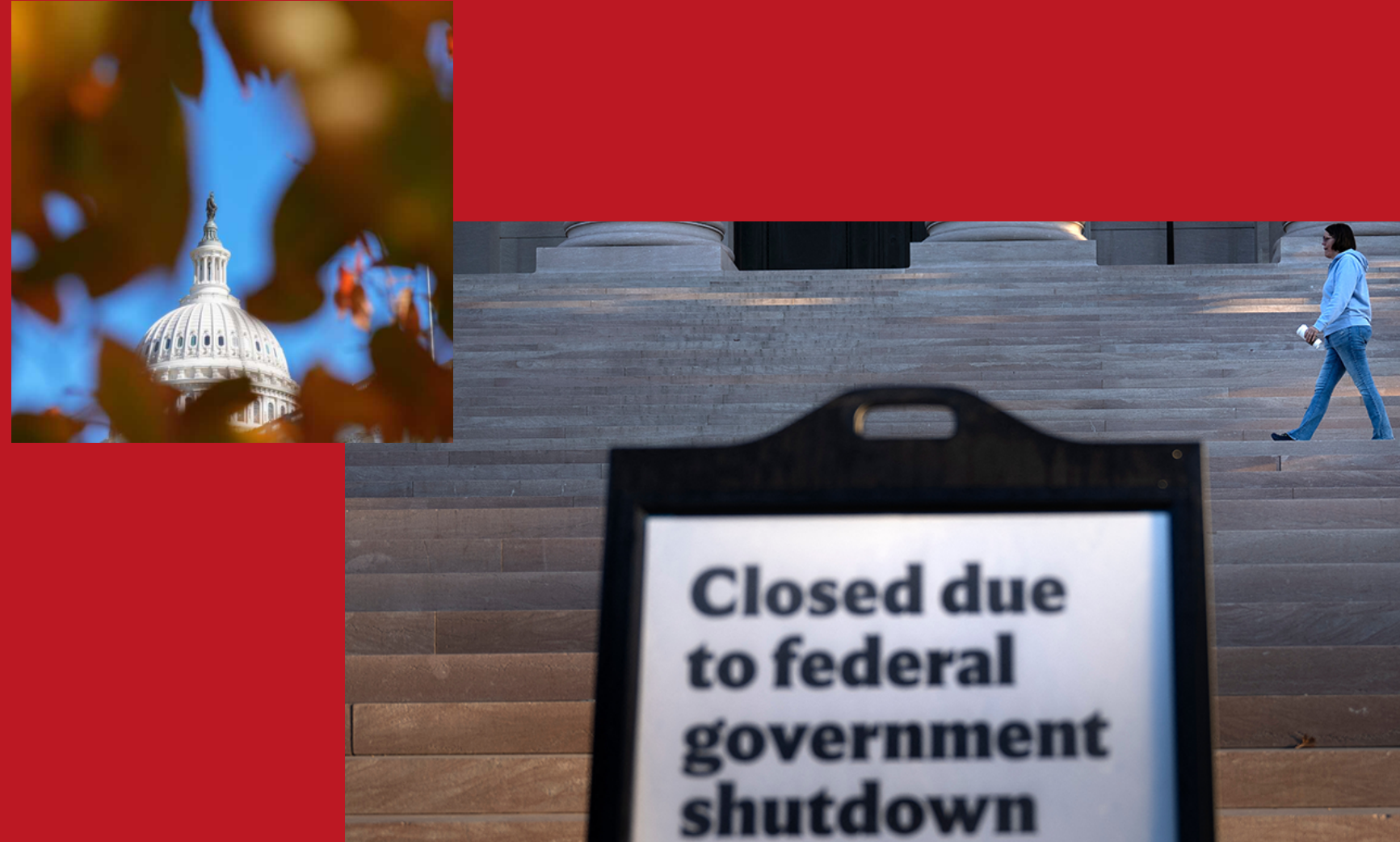
Source: USDA, Census Bureau

UTILITARIANISM

THIS FRAMEWORK JUDGES ACTIONS BY THEIR OUTCOMES, SPECIFICALLY, BY WHETHER THE ACTION MAXIMIZES OVERALL WELL-BEING (HAPPINESS, HEALTH, WELFARE) AND/OR MINIMIZES HARM.

THE HARM IN THIS CURRENT EVENT IS SUBSTANTIAL FOOD INSECURITY, HEALTH RISKS, LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES ESPECIALLY FOR KIDS AND THE "BENEFITS" ARE LESS IMMEDIATE OR LESS VISIBLE. OVERALL THE UTILITARIAN VIEWPOINT WOULD BE CRITICAL OF THE SHUTDOWN'S IMPACT ON SNAP.





THIS FRAMEWORK EMPHASIZES MORAL DUTIES, RIGHTS, FAIRNESS, AND JUSTICE, NOT JUST OUTCOMES. IT HOLDS THAT CERTAIN ACTIONS ARE RIGHT OR WRONG IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR CONSEQUENCES, BASED ON PRINCIPLES LIKE HUMAN DIGNITY, EQUAL RESPECT, FAIRNESS, **RIGHTS TO BASIC GOODS**.

FROM A RIGHTS/DUTY PERSPECTIVE, THE DELAY OR CUT IN SNAP BENEFITS IS SEEN AS A VIOLATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DUTY TO PROTECT BASIC HUMAN NEEDS, ESPECIALLY WHEN TOOLS EXIST TO MAINTAIN FUNDING.

THIS ETHICAL FRAMEWORK WOULD ALSO BE CRITICAL OF THE SHUTDOWNS IMPACT ON SNAP.

DEONTOLOGY

MY OPINION

I BELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF SNAP DURING THE SHUTDOWN WAS ETHICALLY IRRESPONSIBLE. FOOD ASSISTANCE IS NOT AN OPTIONAL BENEFIT, IT IS A LIFELINE. THE DECISION TO IMPOSE NEW ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS RIGHT BEFORE A FUNDING DEADLINE SHOWED POOR PLANNING AND CREATED RISK FOR MILLIONS.

BOTH ETHICALLY AND PRACTICALLY, NO POLITICAL DISPUTE SHOULD JEOPARDIZE PEOPLE'S ABILITY TO EAT. EVEN IF PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS ARE NEEDED, REFORMS SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED GRADUALLY, WITH STABILITY AS THE HIGHEST PRIORITY.



IN CLASS

1.

SHOULD ACCESS TO FOOD BE CONSIDERED A HUMAN RIGHT THE GOVERNMENT MUST PROTECT, EVEN DURING POLITICAL STANDOFFS?

2.

WERE THE REAPPLICATION AND VERIFICATION REQUIREMENTS A REASONABLE STEP TO REDUCE FRAUD, OR AN UNNECESSARY BARRIER FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS?

3.

DO YOU THINK SNAP SHOULD BE INSULATED FROM SHUTDOWNS SIMILAR TO SOCIAL SECURITY OR SHOULD IT REMAIN TIED TO ANNUAL FUNDING?

4.

IS IT ETHICAL FOR LAWMAKERS TO USE SAFETY-NET PROGRAMS AS LEVERAGE DURING BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS? WHY OR WHY NOT?

QUESTIONS

Food stamps are back, but millions will soon lose benefits permanently

Even though the shutdown is over, the GOP's signature tax and spending law is poised to kick people off the nation's largest anti-hunger program.



An employee stocks papayas at Price Choice supermarket in Miami, which participates in USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. | Lynne Sladky/AP

“Food Stamps Are Back, but Millions Will Soon Lose Benefits.” Politico, 15 Nov. 2025, www.politico.com/news/2025/11/15/food-stamps-snap-trump-one-big-beautiful-bill-impact-00653447.