



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

This message is being sent to network public policy personnel.

FEBRUARY 2016

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or Food Stamps)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly food stamps) helps millions of people put food on the table every month. It provides monthly benefits to eligible low-income families, which can be used to purchase food. Almost 900,000 New Jerseyans rely on SNAP to help meet their nutritional needs.

Although **New Jersey** has taken steps to expand eligibility for SNAP and streamline the application process, **only about 77 percent of those eligible actually participate in the program.** New Jersey lags considerably behind the national average of 83 percent of eligible people accessing SNAP benefits. Specific cuts to benefits and limits to access for certain groups threaten the important nutrition support the program provides struggling individuals. This is the third time in the last few years that the SNAP program has received cuts in New Jersey. In two of the three instances, cuts could have been mitigated at the state level.

ABAWD – Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents

Last month, the State of New Jersey reinstated the ABAWD rules. This means that all able-bodied individuals between the ages of 18 and 50 who have no dependents need to meet a 20-hour or more requirement in the form of hours worked, employment training or community service within strict time limits. Failing to comply for more than three months will lead to a loss of benefits for three years. **Because ALL SNAP RECIPIENTS have a work requirement (but do not lose benefits in this same manner), this measure is unnecessary.**

More than half of the states have taken waivers for specific counties or municipalities that either have high unemployment or a lack of training programs to meet the need. Fifteen of New Jersey's counties and five of its municipalities qualify for these waivers, but the state has not applied. The number of those affected ranges from 11,000 to 30,000.

State Action: Support legislation for waivers of ABAWD for specific areas.

Legislation has been introduced in both the Senate and Assembly (**S993/A2777**). It requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to request a waiver for SNAP/ ABAWD time limits.

**CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS!
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State elected official contact information can be found easily by using your zip code, thanks to the League of Women Voters. Visit <http://lwv.org/> and follow the prompts on the right-hand side of the page (**Contact Elected Officials**).

MESSAGE:

STOP THE SNAP CUTS. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps) provides vital benefits to those who struggle to put food on the table. Other states have found ways to protect this

program. New Jersey needs to follow their lead. SUPPORT LEGISLATION THAT PROTECTS BENEFITS, including Senate bill S993 and/or Assembly bill A2777.

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