



AFSCME Opposes Farm Bill with SNAP Privatization Poison Pill

AFSCME strongly opposes the Farm, Food and National Security Act of 2026, H.R. 7567. The bill takes no steps to correct the \$187 billion in punitive cuts to SNAP that halved federal investments essential for state and local administration and, for the first time ever, force an unaffordable benefit cost shift to states. States that cannot afford the benefits cost shift could be forced to withdraw from SNAP entirely. SNAP participation already fell by 2.5 million people (6%) between the July 2025 enactment of H.R. 1 and December 2025. The additional looming cuts and cost shifts, scheduled to take effect in October 2026 and October 2027, are an existential threat to the program.

H.R. 7567 allows privatization of SNAP eligibility determination with no USDA oversight. The bill removes protections that ensure SNAP eligibility will be determined by merit-based, professional public employees. AFSCME represents civil servants that administer SNAP on the state and county level. Privatization experiments in SNAP have failed abysmally, reducing access to services and wasting tax dollars by outsourcing benefits administration to poorly trained private contractors. Make no mistake, privatization is a veiled attempt to limit access and cut SNAP benefits.

- **For decades, federal law has required that Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility and benefits determinations must be conducted by public employees who are hired through a merit-based personnel system, because it ensures program integrity.** Merit-based staff provide application assistance, answer client questions, pursue missing information, and provide verification guidance. Merit staff develop a broad knowledge base that benefits those in need who rely upon their strong understanding of the complex programs. SNAP merit staff are trained to apply the law to often complicated facts. Contractors do not have this knowledge or experience.
- **Merit-staffing requirements protect the public and taxpayers against politically motivated decision-making when making benefit determinations in SNAP.** Merit staff are civil service government workers who act as honest brokers to match eligible applicants with programs and to deliver benefits and services efficiently and effectively. Merit staff conduct the people's business according to transparent standards, free from political influence and without fear of arbitrary management action or retaliation. Merit staff are hired and retained based solely on their qualifications and performance.
- **Even limited privatization experiments in SNAP have failed, resulting in increased costs, worsening backlogs and increasing error rates.** A Texas State Comptroller's report on the failed Texas privatization effort concluded it "failed the state and the citizens it was designed to serve" and called the privatization effort a "perfect story of wasted tax dollars, reduced access to services and profiteering at taxpayers' expense."¹
- **Privatization is a veiled attempt to limit access and block SNAP benefits.** In both Texas and Indiana's failed pilots, SNAP beneficiaries experienced extended wait times on phone lines, limited or

¹ Congressional Record floor debate from 2018 <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CREC-2018-05-17/html/CREC-2018-05-17-pt1-PgH4188-2.htm> (accessed May 15, 2014)



no access to case managers, the inability to correct errors in their benefits, and frustration to access the benefits to which they were entitled.

- **Error rates could skyrocket, bust state budgets, and further limit benefits for eligible families.** SNAP is a complex program that has become even more complicated with new restrictions and additional, so-called “work requirements.” SNAP applications are on average 20 pages long and require assistance from eligibility workers to complete, along with the many requisite documents for verification for each household member and an interview to confirm details. SNAP eligibility workers report that it takes at least a year to fully understand the program’s eligibility rules.
- **Private companies often have little understanding of the complexity of SNAP law and are largely motivated to increase their profits.** Many SNAP clients, including the elderly or disabled, have complex cases that require trained civil service workers to dedicate significant time to appropriately screen and verify their information and ensure they receive the correct benefit amounts. When these functions are turned over to for-profit companies, mistakes are often made, as seen in Indiana and Texas when they experimented with privatization.
- **Privatization would mean the loss of jobs.** Privatization could result in tens of thousands of good civil service jobs with health and retirement benefits being shipped outside the communities they currently serve, possibly out of state or overseas. This provision would only serve to line the pockets of government contractors.
- **Outsourced companies generally pay less than government jobs and rarely provide essential benefits** including health care and retirement to their employees. Turnover is generally higher in outsourced companies.
- **Privatization could compromise the security of participants’ data.** SNAP collects detailed confidential information about applicants and participants, including Social Security numbers, birthdays, income and employment information. Protecting personally identifiable information (PII) is an essential part of training a SNAP worker. But in Texas’ privatization, a private contractor listed an incorrect fax number on program materials, resulting in clients inadvertently sending sensitive personal information to a warehouse in Seattle.
- **Outsourcing can undermine SNAP’s ability to respond to economic downturns.** Contracts for private companies to process applications and make eligibility determinations are typically written to accommodate a maximum caseload and cap costs. In Indiana, this hindered the state’s ability to serve clients when the Great Recession hit after the state rolled out its privatization initiative. With fixed contract terms and inadequate staffing, Indiana’s contractor couldn’t process the unanticipated volume of applications.²

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AFSCME’s 1.4 million members provide the vital services that make America happen. With members in communities across the nation, serving in hundreds of different occupations — from nurses to corrections officers, child care providers to sanitation workers — AFSCME advocates for fairness in the workplace, excellence in public services and freedom and opportunity for all working families.

² <https://balkin.blogspot.com/2012/08/indiana-court-autopsies-welfare.html> (accessed May 15, 2024)