

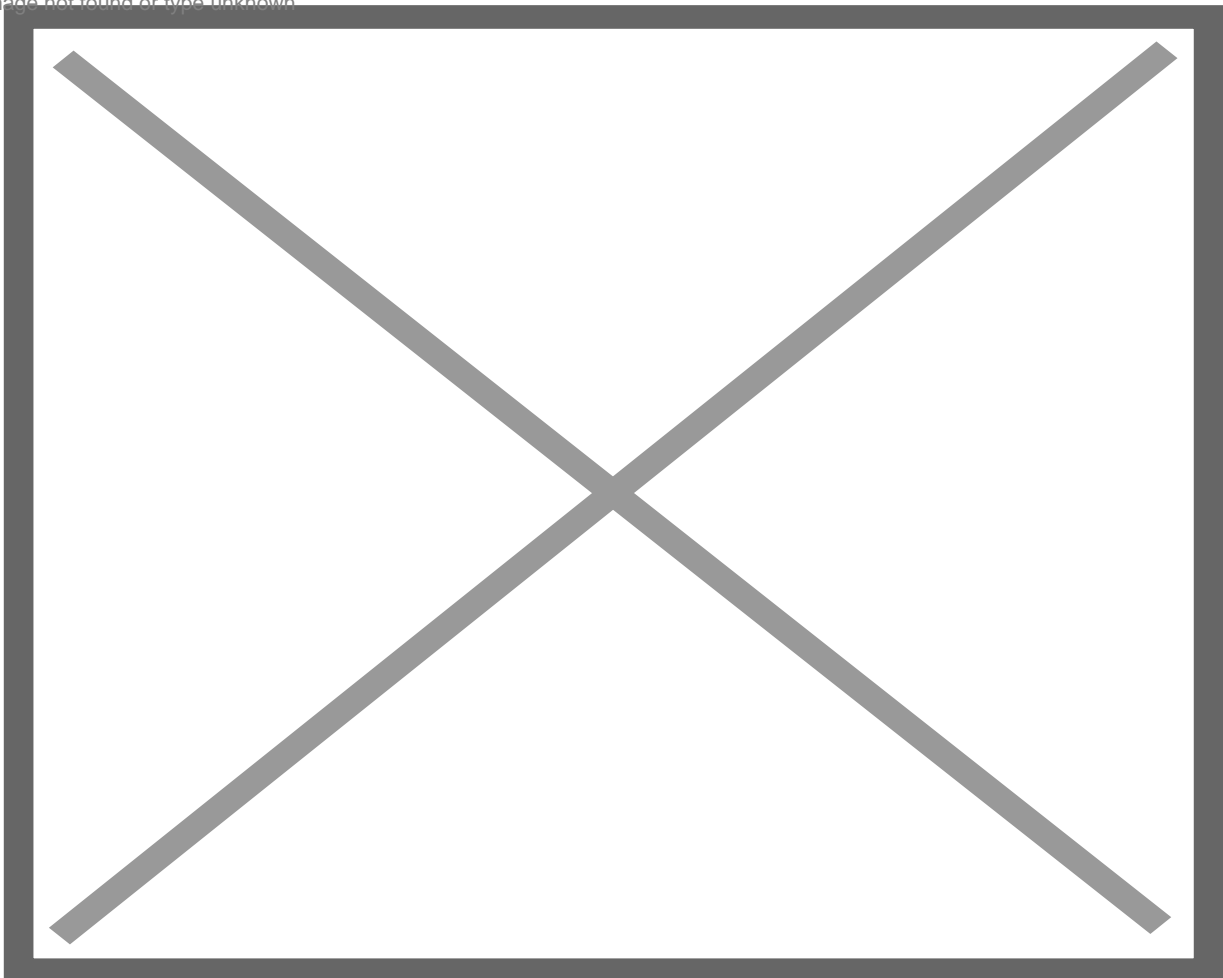
Republicans Plan \$230 Billion Cuts to Food Stamp Over 10 Years in \$4.9 Trillion Tax Plan, Sparking Bipartisan Tensions

The GOP's proposed tax package seeks to make Trump-era cuts permanent while offsetting costs through deep reductions to SNAP, Medicaid, and CFPB funding—drawing criticism from Democrats and moderates who warn of increased poverty and food insecurity.

Federal / **Published On May 13, 2025 06:08 AM /**

Staff Consortium **May 13, 2025**

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As House Republicans prepare a sweeping tax and spending package to fulfill President Donald Trump's second-term economic agenda, proposed changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) have triggered intense debate on Capitol Hill and across the country.

The proposed legislation—unveiled on May 12 —seeks to extend the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which is set to expire at the end of the year. It also includes new tax breaks for tips, overtime pay, and local taxes. The full package is estimated to cost \$4.9 trillion over 10 years and includes a range of cost offsets such as cuts to Medicaid, a tax increase on university endowments, and a major overhaul of SNAP.

SNAP, the nation's largest anti-hunger initiative, provides nutritional assistance to roughly 40 million low-income Americans and operates on an annual budget of \$110 to \$120 billion. The program supports children, seniors, and families in an effort to combat food insecurity.

Among the proposed reforms is a cost-sharing model that would shift a portion of SNAP's funding responsibility to individual states. An initial draft of the plan called for a \$230 billion reduction in SNAP funding over a decade, with suggestions of a 30% across-the-board cut to federal spending on the program. House Republicans have also discussed removing presidential authority to recalculate SNAP benefits, a move that could restrict the program's responsiveness to economic shifts.

Following pushback from moderate Republicans and advocacy groups, the House Agriculture Committee revised some of the most controversial provisions of the cost-sharing plan on May 6. Rep. Derrick Van Orden (R-WI) raised concerns about the proposal's potential impact on rural communities, prompting amendments to soften the proposal. Nonetheless, the revised plan still includes stricter eligibility requirements and possible reductions in benefit levels.

Republican leaders argue that SNAP reforms are necessary to address fiscal sustainability, reduce federal spending, and curb program abuse. They contend that the program's current structure is inefficient, citing instances of fraud, such as trafficking of SNAP benefits, and errors in eligibility determinations that lead to overpayments. A 2023 USDA report estimated that SNAP payment errors (both overpayments and underpayments) occurred in about 11.5% of cases, though fraud itself accounted for a smaller fraction.

House Agriculture Committee members have emphasized that cost-sharing with states would encourage innovation, accountability, and stricter oversight to minimize misuse. House Speaker Mike Johnson has underscored that the tax package prioritizes economic growth through tax cuts, which Republicans believe will stimulate job creation and reduce dependency on federal assistance. Some GOP members have also expressed a desire to protect SNAP benefits for the most vulnerable while streamlining the program to eliminate waste and ensure benefits reach those truly in need.

Democrats and advocacy groups have fiercely criticized the proposed SNAP changes, warning that they would exacerbate food insecurity and harm vulnerable populations. They argue that claims of widespread program abuse are overstated, with USDA data showing that trafficking rates in SNAP are low, estimated at less than 2% of total benefits. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) challenged the cuts, highlighting their impact on Western New York, where food banks are already strained. Senator Peter Welch (D-VT) stated that the tax bill could "kick millions off" SNAP, undermining efforts to support working families.

On April 2, Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA), along with Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Jahana Hayes (D-CT), introduced legislation aimed at blocking the \$230 billion in proposed SNAP reductions.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) condemned the cuts, calling them an attack on "hardworking families" to finance tax breaks for the wealthy.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) has issued repeated warnings that the proposed cuts would significantly worsen food insecurity and poverty nationwide. A February 2025 CBPP report noted that children—a large share of SNAP recipients—would be especially impacted.

The Urban Institute and the Florida Policy Institute echoed those concerns, cautioning that reductions to SNAP and other safety net programs, combined with rising living costs could further entrench economic hardship for vulnerable families.

The SNAP provisions have created notable divisions within the Republican Party, especially among moderates representing high-poverty districts. The original cost-sharing proposal triggered what was described as “immense backlash” from both centrists and some conservatives wary of political fallout.

Facing these internal pressures, Speaker Johnson must now balance demands for unity with the policy ambitions of the party’s leadership.

The SNAP reforms are part of a larger reconciliation package that also proposes major cuts to Medicaid and a 70% reduction in the budget for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). These align with the Republican Study Committee’s budget, which outlines \$4.5 trillion in healthcare spending reductions over 10 years.

Critics warn that while the package claims to offset tax cuts with spending reductions, the numbers do not fully cover the \$4.9 trillion cost, potentially worsening the federal deficit.

Even so, the final shape of the legislation remains unclear. One unresolved issue is the proposed \$30,000 limit on the State and Local Tax (SALT) deduction, a sticking point for blue-state Republicans.

The ultimate passage of the tax and spending package—along with its SNAP reforms—remains uncertain. Lawmakers are expected to continue wrangling over the balance between fiscal goals and the well-being of low-income Americans in the weeks ahead.