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Treasury Secretary Says SNAP Benefits Could Resume by Wednesday Amid Shutdown Court Battles

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the administration will comply with rulings directing use of \$6B in reserves to restore aid for 42M Americans, as the shutdown enters its 34th day and states brace for processing delays and mounting food demand.

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U.S. Department of Agriculture headquarters in Washington, D.C., August 1, 2025 — the agency ordered by federal courts to release contingency funds for November SNAP payments during the ongoing government shutdown. By. USDA

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent indicated on November 2 that Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for nearly 42 million low-income Americans could resume

as early as Wednesday, November 5, following federal court orders compelling the Trump administration to tap contingency funds during the ongoing government shutdown.

Appearing on CNN's "State of the Union," Bessent acknowledged the administration's intent to comply with the rulings but stressed logistical hurdles, stating, "There's a process that has to be followed, so we've got to figure out what the process is." He added that President Donald Trump "wants to make sure that people get their food benefits," responding affirmatively to host Jake Tapper's query: "So, it could be done by Wednesday?" The comments come after two federal judges ruled the USDA's decision to suspend November payments unlawful, averting an immediate cutoff but leaving states and recipients in limbo as the shutdown enters its 34th day.

The potential resumption follows [October 31 orders](#) from U.S. District Judges Indira Talwani in Boston and Mary S. McElroy in Providence, Rhode Island, which directed the USDA to use \$6 billion in multi-year reserves—appropriated in fiscal years 2024 and 2025—and explore Section 32 commodity funds exceeding \$23 billion to cover the program's \$8.5-9 billion monthly cost. Talwani described the USDA's reversal from its pre-shutdown contingency plan as an "erroneous construction" of statutes, mandating a November 3 report on full or prorated payments. McElroy's restraining order required "timely or as soon as possible" distribution, rejecting the administration's Antideficiency Act argument that reserves are for disasters, not lapses.

The USDA, in an October 24 memo, had cited legal barriers to routine benefits without appropriations, but Bessent confirmed no appeal, noting, "The best way for SNAP benefits to get paid is for Democrats, five Democrats, to cross the aisle and reopen the government."

Bessent's remarks underscore the administration's balancing act: compliance with judicial mandates while attributing the crisis to Democrats' 13 Senate rejections of a House-passed clean continuing resolution extending funding through November 21. The impasse centers on Democrats' demands for Affordable Care Act subsidy extensions to cap premiums for 24 million enrollees, versus Republicans' insistence on decoupling issues. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins, in prior statements, emphasized, "100% unequivocally, USDA does not have the \$9.2 billion...There's not just pots of \$9.2 billion sitting around," highlighting reserves' partial coverage and risks of audits or delays in prorated payouts. The Treasury's involvement signals interagency coordination, with OMB Director Russ Vought overseeing reallocations that have already funded military pay (\$8 billion from Pentagon accounts) and WIC (\$300 million from tariffs).

For recipients—1 in 7 Americans, including 19 million children and 8 million seniors—the Wednesday timeline offers tentative relief, though states warn of 1-2 week processing lags even post-funding. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, where 10,603 households receive SNAP, the Bryan administration and the 36th Legislature [united to expedite](#) issuance of checks to recipients, representing half of their monthly benefits. At least 25 plaintiff states, led by Massachusetts and California, reported spending millions on administration and food bank surges without reimbursement, with Illinois estimating \$110 million in lost tax revenue from reduced grocery spending. Food pantries like Denver's Food Bank of the Rockies have seen 30% demand increases, with executive director Jim Conwell telling Reuters, "This could get really bad. We're already serving more people than before COVID."

The shutdown, the second-longest on record, has furloughed 750,000 workers and prompted lawsuits alleging Administrative Procedure Act violations, with plaintiffs arguing congressional intent for uninterrupted entitlements under the Food and Nutrition Act. The USDA's pre-lapse plan anticipated reserves for "participant benefits" during mid-year gaps, a stance reversed

October 24 amid legal consultations. Bessent's optimism aligns with Talwani's options—full payments by Monday or partial by Wednesday—but experts like the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' Dottie Rosenbaum note historical precedents where SNAP continued via obligated funds, without full interruptions since 1964.

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