

Trump Administration to Appeal Judge's Order Requiring Full SNAP Payments by Friday

The administration is challenging a Rhode Island federal court ruling that mandates full November SNAP funding despite the ongoing shutdown, arguing that diverting additional money without congressional approval would be improper and unsustainable.

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A volunteer organizes boxes of canned goods, pasta, and beverages at a community food pantry — a reflection of growing reliance on food assistance programs like SNAP as the federal government shutdown continues.

The Trump administration is planning to appeal a federal judge's order requiring full delivery of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits to states by Friday, November 7.

This follows U.S. District Judge John McConnell's ruling in Rhode Island, which rebuked the administration for delays in funding the program during the ongoing government shutdown. The decision comes after President Donald Trump expressed that it would be his “honor” to provide funding for the critical program once the shutdown ends, emphasizing that full payments would resume immediately upon congressional approval of appropriations.

Last week, two federal courts [ordered the resumption](#) of SNAP funding amid the shutdown, now in its 37th day. The courts offered two compliance options: a full payment to states by Monday, November 3, or partial payments by Wednesday, November 5, while expeditiously resolving any administrative hurdles.

The administration opted for the partial payment route, utilizing \$5.25 billion from SNAP's emergency contingency fund to cover approximately 65% of November's benefits after administrative costs—a reduction of about 35% from normal allotments. Officials declined to tap additional funds from unrelated programs, such as the Section 32 commodity purchase account (primarily for child nutrition), citing legal and fiscal constraints. In a Department of Justice (DOJ) court filing, lawyers argued that diverting roughly \$4 billion from such sources to SNAP would be improper without congressional authorization, as it could create deficits in other essential programs that Congress might not immediately address through appropriations. They contended this approach adheres to statutes and regulations, and is not “arbitrary and capricious,” while blaming any resulting shortfalls on Congress's failure to pass funding. The administration also noted that, even after such a transfer, \$19.35 billion would remain in Section 32 funds—sufficient to cover child nutrition through May 2026 and beyond—though reserves are being held to guard against potential future congressional delays.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent expressed optimism early in the week that the Wednesday partial payment deadline could be met. However, USDA official Patrick Penn later cited “procedural difficulties,” including “administrative and clerical burdens” such as states needing weeks or months to update eligibility systems and distribute reduced benefits to recipients. DOJ lawyers further asserted in filings that the federal government had “resolved all of the burdens that [it] is responsible for” under regulations, shifting responsibility for any distribution delays to state agencies that administer the program locally. A USDA spokesperson attributed the overall funding impasse to Senate Democrats, who have rejected Republican-backed stopgap measures 14 times to end the shutdown, compromising programs like SNAP in the process.

U.S. District Judge McConnell took exception to the anticipated delays and, on Thursday afternoon, ordered full SNAP payments to states by Friday. He mandated the use of additional monies beyond the contingency fund to cover November's full distribution, describing the benefit interruption as “a problem that could have and should have been avoided” and criticizing the USDA for creating unnecessary hurdles by not fully utilizing available funds or notifying states promptly.

In response, administration officials filed a notice of appeal with the DOJ, challenging both the latest order and the prior week's ruling. President Trump reiterated that SNAP payments would only be issued in full once the government reopens, aligning with his view that judicial intervention cannot override congressional funding priorities during a shutdown. Vice President JD Vance called the order “absurd,” arguing it oversteps by dictating executive triage decisions amid a “Democrat government shutdown.” He stated, “What we'd like to do is for the Democrats to open up the government of course, then we can fund SNAP,” and added that “in the midst of a shutdown, we can't have a federal court telling the president how he has to triage the situation.” The appeal seeks to uphold the administration's position that full funding requires legislative

action, not unilateral executive or judicial mandates that risk reallocating funds from other vital areas like child nutrition.

Virgin Islanders enrolled in the program [are among the few nationwide](#) supported by local government during the federal shutdown. Over the weekend, checks were issued to the over 10,600 SNAP households in the U.S. Virgin Islands, ensuring that nearly 21,000 individuals could stock their pantries and refrigerators with food at the beginning of the month. Although these payments covered only half of each household's eligible monthly benefit, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has pledged to continue utilizing territorial cash reserves to sustain food assistance for the rest of November and into December if necessary.

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