

logo not found or type unknown

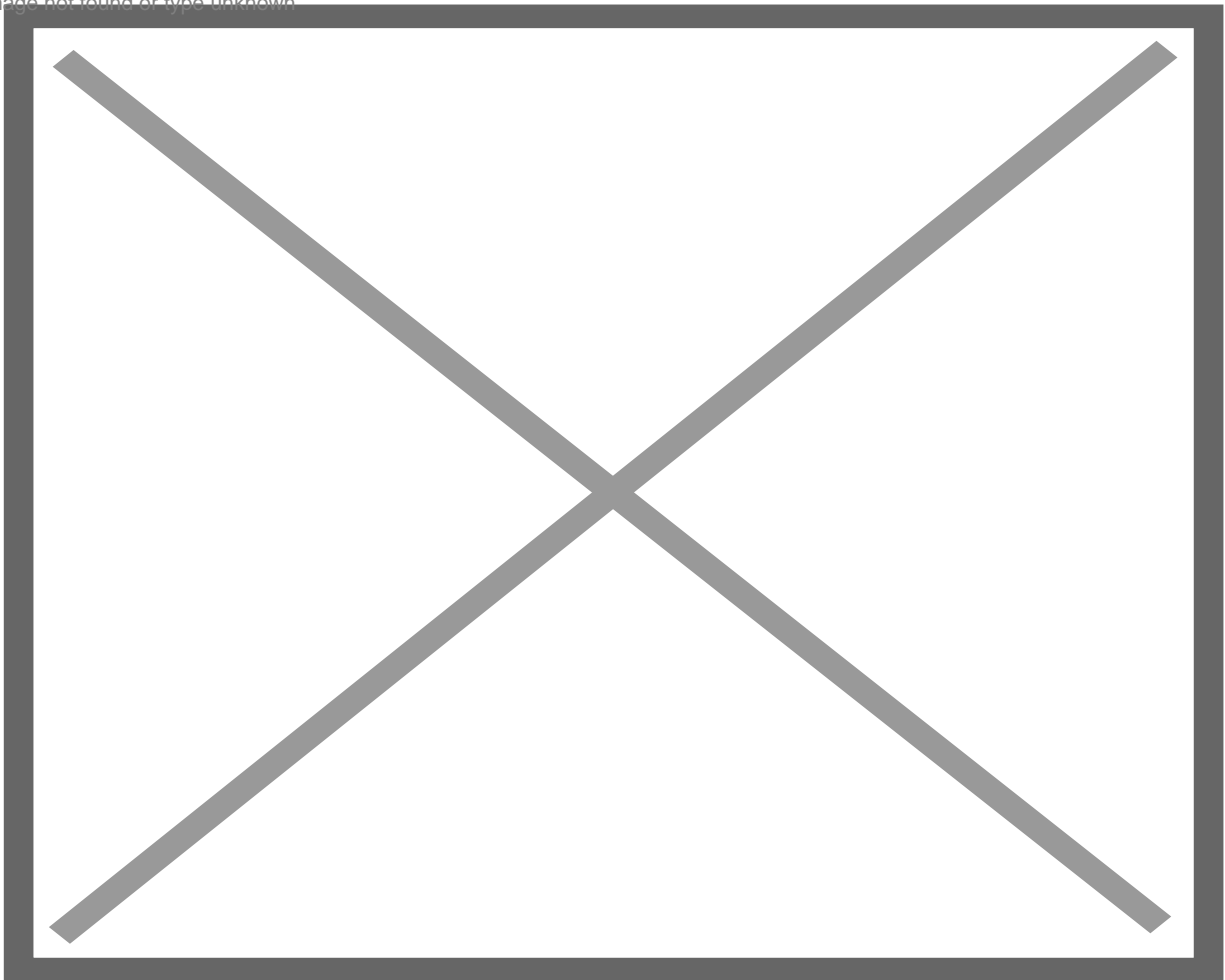
Supreme Court Temporarily Blocks Full SNAP Payments Amid Shutdown, Freezing \$4 Billion in Aid

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson granted the Trump administration's emergency stay late Friday, pausing a lower court's order to deliver full November food assistance benefits to 42 million Americans as the government shutdown enters its 39th day.

Federal / **Published On November 08, 2025 06:07 AM /**

Janeke Simon **November 08, 2025**

Image not found or type unknown



The United States Supreme Court Building.

The U.S. Supreme Court on Friday evening granted the Trump administration's emergency request for a stay, temporarily halting a lower federal court's mandate to fully fund November's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits by the end of the day. Issued by Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, the pause affects roughly \$4 billion in payments to states,

impacting an estimated 42 million low-income Americans who depend on SNAP for groceries during the government shutdown, now in its 39th day.

The decision came swiftly after U.S. District Judge John McConnell in Rhode Island ordered full payments on Thursday, November 6, following the administration's announcement that partial benefits—covering about 65% of normal allotments—would face significant delays due to procedural and administrative complexities. Earlier that week, two federal courts had directed the resumption of SNAP funding, offering the government flexibility: full payments by Monday, November 3, or partial disbursements by Wednesday, November 5. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) selected the partial option, drawing from a \$5.25 billion contingency fund after accounting for administrative costs, but officials emphasized that implementation would extend beyond the Wednesday target.

In a November 4 memo, USDA Deputy Under Secretary Patrick A. Penn explained the challenges: Distributing reduced benefits involves "procedural difficulties," including states updating eligibility systems, verifying household data, and reprogramming electronic benefit transfer cards—processes that could take "weeks or months" rather than days. Penn noted that these steps ensure accuracy and prevent errors, such as overpayments, which could lead to future clawbacks and additional burdens on recipients. The USDA revised its plan on November 5 to increase partial allotments from 50% to 65% of normal levels, aiming to stretch the contingency fund further while minimizing shortfalls. "We appreciate the partnership with States that administer SNAP and will continue to keep you apprised with updates," Penn wrote, underscoring the collaborative effort despite the constraints.

The Trump administration has consistently attributed the funding constraints to congressional inaction during the shutdown, which began October 1 over disputes on spending priorities and healthcare subsidies. In appealing McConnell's full-payment order to the First Circuit Court of Appeals—which initially declined a stay—the Department of Justice (DOJ) argued that judicial mandates cannot substitute for legislative appropriations. "This is a crisis, to be sure, but it is a crisis occasioned by congressional failure, and that can only be solved by congressional action," DOJ attorneys wrote in filings. They contended there is "no lawful basis for an order that directs USDA to somehow find \$4 billion in the metaphorical couch cushions," referring to proposals to reallocate from other USDA accounts like Section 32, which supports child nutrition programs.

Attorney General Pam Bondi echoed this in a statement, criticizing the order as overreach: "A single district court should not seize center stage in the shutdown, seek to upend political negotiations that could produce swift political solutions for SNAP and other programs, and dictate its own preferences for how scarce federal funds should be spent."

The administration maintains that diverting Section 32 funds—despite \$19.35 billion available—would violate congressional intent, risk deficits in school meals and other initiatives, and rely on "pure speculation" that lawmakers would replenish them post-shutdown. Instead, officials have prioritized the contingency fund to avoid broader disruptions, with full benefits pledged to resume "immediately" once Congress passes a continuing resolution.

Judge McConnell, however, expressed frustration with the anticipated delays in his Thursday ruling, stating the administration "failed to consider the practical consequences associated with this decision to only partially fund SNAP. They knew that there would be a long delay in paying partial SNAP payments and failed to consider the harms individuals who rely on those benefits would suffer." He mandated using additional USDA resources beyond the contingency fund to cover the full November distribution, a step the DOJ described as thrusting "the Judiciary into the

ongoing shutdown negotiations" and potentially prolonging the impasse.

Prior to the Supreme Court's intervention, the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service had notified states it was "working towards implementing 2025 full benefit issuances in compliance with the November 6, 2025 order." This prompted several states, including California, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, to begin distributing full benefits to eligible households. As of Saturday, November 8, the exact number of recipients who received payments remains unclear, with advocacy groups urging swift resolution to prevent heightened food insecurity. The stay provides time for the First Circuit to review the appeal, leaving SNAP families in uncertainty as bipartisan calls grow for Congress to end the shutdown.

© Viconsortium 2025