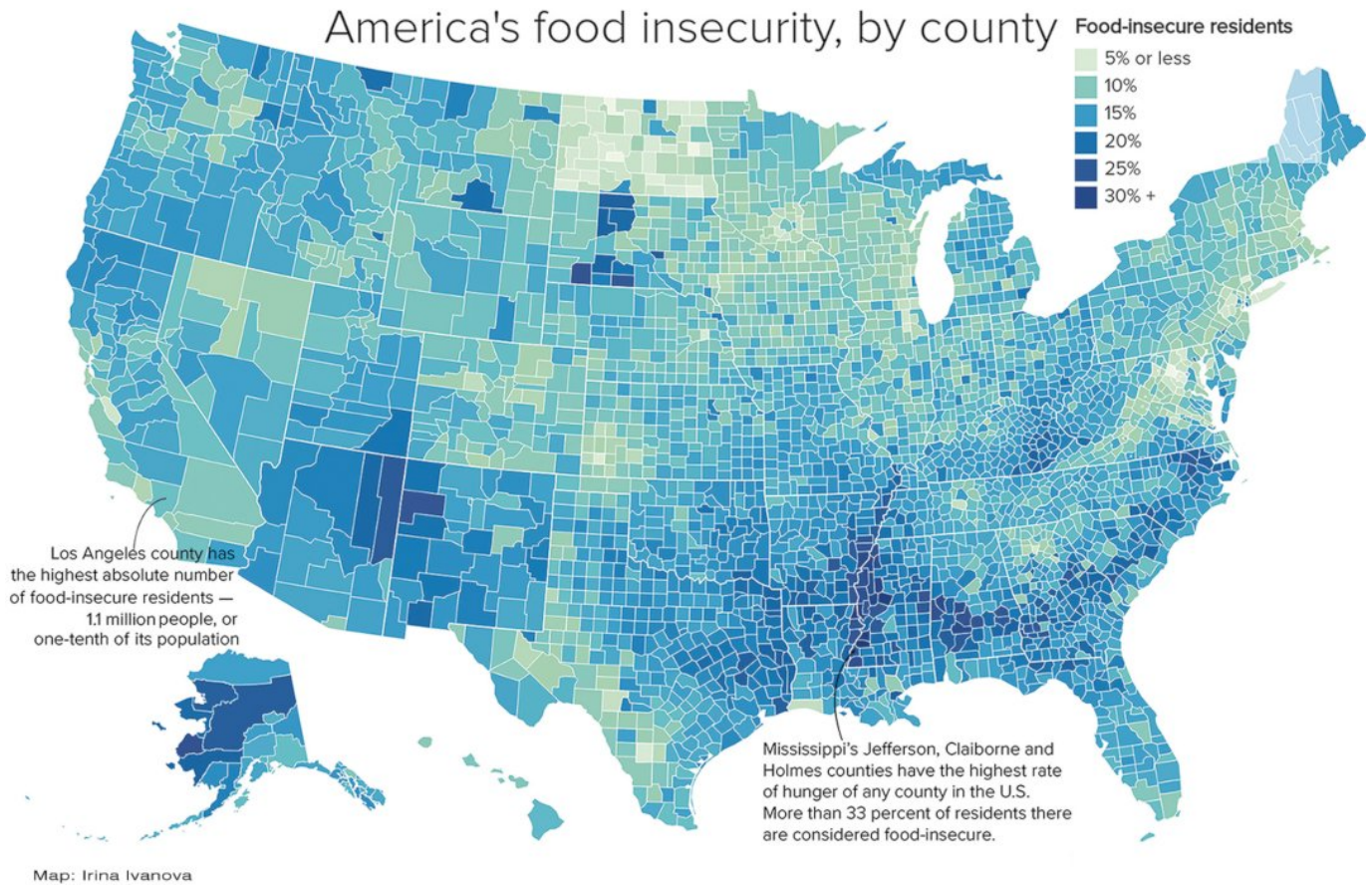


FOOD IS A RIGHT! Unite to fight attack on SNAP benefits

written by Struggle - La Lucha
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Irina Ivanova • Source: Feeding America

Struggle-La Lucha newspaper and the Socialist Unity Party/Partido de Socialismo Unido condemn the Trump administration's announced [changes to the SNAP food assistance program](#) (food stamps) that would drop 700,000 people from the program and reduce the benefits of millions more starting in April 2020. The rule change

tightens work requirements imposed by the Clinton administration in 1996, but which have been waived for many states and regions that suffer unemployment above the national average.

With millions of workers and families currently hungry and homeless, and a new capitalist recession looming, it is urgent that the working class and its organizations — labor unions, community groups, tenants organizations, student movements — unite to push back against this attack on the livelihood of the entire working class, and especially low-wage workers, the unemployed and underemployed.

While the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which administers the SNAP program, claims the changes apply “only” to [single adults without dependents](#), that’s a lie. Many people classified that way also have children, senior relatives and extended families who rely on their benefits. Many already work part-time, gig jobs, or juggle multiple jobs that may still not add up to the hours required.

In addition, the Trump administration plans further rules changes that could result in up to 4 million people losing food assistance and reduce benefits for another 3.1 million households, according to a [recent study by the Urban Institute](#). A million children could lose [free school lunches](#).

A related but less-publicized Trump proposal would [strip millions of people of disability benefits](#) administered by the Social Security Administration — mostly children and older workers.

The Trump administration claims that the SNAP rule change will save taxpayers \$5.5 billion over five years. Yet just a week after the rule change was announced, congressional Republicans and Democrats overwhelmingly approved [\\$738 billion in military spending for 2020](#), up \$22 billion from 2019. The so-called National Defense Authorization Act includes money for Trump’s proposed “Space Force” boondoggle, reminiscent of Ronald Reagan’s “Star Wars” program.

That brings the [total yearly spending increases](#) for the Pentagon under Trump to more than \$130 billion, at a time when people here and abroad want U.S. troops brought home from almost two decades of costly and destructive Washington military adventures and 800-plus overseas bases.

Attacks on SNAP and other benefits will have a ripple effect far beyond the lives directly hurt by these cuts. Some [136 of the 150 U.S. counties](#) with the highest SNAP participation rate are rural. In these communities, small grocery stores depend on the income from SNAP benefits and could close down without it — making food harder and more expensive to come by for many other workers. The same is true for poor neighborhoods in cities, where it is increasingly common to see large grocery chains posting signs that say “SNAP not accepted” in tune with encroaching gentrification. Many poor and working-class communities already suffer from a shortage of grocery stores with decent prices, selection and quality.

[According to Feeding America](#), 97 percent of U.S. counties, in every state, already include households facing hunger that are ineligible for SNAP and other government food assistance programs. After previous Trump cuts, the number of people receiving SNAP benefits fell to 36 million from 40 million. Food banks and pantries all over the country are overburdened as [1 in 7 people](#) in the U.S. rely on them for at least a portion of their diet. Food banks have had to expand their services to [college campuses throughout Southern California](#) as more students do not have enough to eat.

The Agriculture Department’s own figures found that [11.8 percent of U.S. residents](#) are “food insecure.” In Baltimore city, [22.2 percent of residents](#), including children, are food insecure. As always in a class society shot through with the ideology of white supremacy and patriarchy, it is people of color, women, LGBTQ2S people, the disabled and children who bear the greatest burden.

Food is a right! Housing, health care and education are rights. These very basic

building blocks of life should be freely available to every person living in the U.S. Every working-class person, employed or unemployed, documented or undocumented, needs these things in order to live, support their families and loved ones, and participate fully in the struggle to change society for the better and save the environment for future generations.



It's still 'last hired, first fired.' The truth about the jobless rate

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Trump supporters and the capitalist media are celebrating [April's employment report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics](#). They claim this is the best jobs picture since 1969.

What's the real story? The drop in the official unemployment rate to 3.6 percent wasn't just because there were an estimated 263,000 more jobs.

"There was also a big drop in the number of people who said they were looking for work. The labor-force participation rate, which measures the share of those 16 and older who are employed or seeking work, sank to 62.8 percent, from 63 percent." ([New York Times, May 3](#))

This isn't because people don't want a job. The official unemployment rate hides how

many people are actually jobless.

As the [Quartz website points out](#), “If the U.S. unemployment rate included everyone who says they want a job, it would be nearly double.”

[Forbes magazine](#) — its motto is “the capitalist tool” — also admits this:

“Imagine that the current labor force participation rate were still at its January 2007 mark: i.e., 66.4 percent and not 63 percent. That would add almost 9 million willing workers. Putting those individuals into the labor force today but adding no more jobs than we actually have raises unemployment from 3.6 percent to 8.5 percent!”

Even during the current phase of capitalist “prosperity,” 40 percent of people [can’t afford a \\$400 emergency payment](#), like for a medical crisis or to repair a car. And one-out-of-four people has no retirement savings.

Twice as bad for Black workers

The official unemployment rate for Black workers is 6.7 percent, over twice that of the white jobless rate of 3.1 percent.

So 154 years after the Civil War, the U.S. racist standard that Black workers have it at least twice as bad as white workers is still in effect.

A. Philip Randolph, who organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and initiated the 1963 Freedom March in Washington D.C., noted that Black poorhouse rates in New York City were twice as high as whites during the 1830s.

At the peak of the capitalist economic cycle, the best Black workers can hope for is to be in a recession. That’s what a 6.7 percent jobless rate is.

The rest of the time for African Americans is an economic depression.

It's even worse for Indigenous workers, [whose unemployment rate was 7.8 percent in 2017.](#)

The jobless rate of Latinx workers was a third higher than that of whites. As incomplete as the Black employment figures are, jobless Latinx workers are often not even counted, especially those who are undocumented.

This massive discrimination is a tremendous weapon for the bosses, who use it to divide workers and extract more profit. Keeping African Americans out of Southern textile mills until the late 1960s, helped keep out unions, too.

Why can't everybody have a job?

The current economy is about as good as it will get for poor and working people. And it's not going to last.

[Frederick Engels, the friend and co-worker of Karl Marx, described what will happen:](#) "The industrial trot breaks into a canter, the canter in turn grows into the headlong gallop of a perfect steeplechase of industry, commercial credit, and speculation, which finally, after breakneck leaps, ends where it began — in the ditch of a crisis."

The economic disaster that Engels described has occurred every 10 years or so since the first world capitalist crisis in 1825. That's because private ownership and capitalist competition prevent an overall economic plan.

Ultimately, too many items and services are produced than can be sold at a profit — even if millions of hungry and homeless people desperately need them.

Because of economic planning, nobody was unemployed in the socialist Soviet Union.

The labor and peoples' movements need to fight for a 30-hour workweek and a massive jobs program for young people. A job is a right!

Only a socialist revolution can guarantee jobs for all.

