

Set a Work Requirement for Able-Bodied Adult Food Stamp Recipients

SAVINGS IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2016-2020	2016-2025
\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$27,000	\$54,000

Heritage Recommendation:

Reform the food stamps program to include a work requirement for able-bodied adults. Able-bodied adults must work, prepare for work, or look for work for a minimum number of hours each month in order to receive benefits. This proposal saves approximately \$5.4 billion annually, and \$54 billion over 10 years.

Rationale:

The food stamps program is one of the largest of the federal government's roughly 80 means-tested welfare programs. Food stamp spending increased from roughly \$20 billion in FY 2000 to nearly \$40 billion in FY 2007. Between FY 2008 and FY 2012, it doubled again to approximately \$80 billion. Some of the growth in food stamp spending was due to the recession, but government policies have also made it easier for people to get on the rolls and remain there.

Food stamp assistance should be directed to those most in need. Able-bodied adults who receive food stamps should be required to work, prepare for work, or look for work in exchange for receiving assistance. Not only do work requirements help ensure that food stamps are directed to those who need them most, a work requirement also promotes the principle of self-sufficiency by directing individuals towards work.

Additional Reading:

- Robert Rector and Katherine Bradley, "Reforming the Food Stamp Program," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2708, July 25, 2012, <http://www.Heritage.org/research/reports/2012/07/reforming-the-food-stamp-program>.
- Rachel Sheffield, "How to Reform Food Stamps," Heritage Foundation *Issue Brief* No. 4045, September 12, 2013, <http://www.Heritage.org/research/reports/2013/09/how-to-reform-food-stamps>.

Calculations:

Savings are calculated based on the current level of 4.5 million able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) receiving food stamps in FY 2013 at a monthly benefit of \$200 (see *Characteristic of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2013*, Table A.15, p. 51, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/ops/Characteristics2013.pdf>). This adds up to a total cost of roughly \$10.8 billion annually. It is projected that a work requirement would result in the ABAWD caseload dropping by half, yielding an annual savings of \$5.4 billion.