

Still hungry

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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If you receive food stamps, [your benefits got reduced by about 5 percent today](#). Good riddance, [guy in California who practically volunteered to be conservatives' poster child for living large on the dole](#). Sorry things just got even harder, [struggling families who make up the vast majority of food stamps recipients](#).

No, legislators didn't Come Together Across the Aisle to Deal With Our Deficit Crisis. Congress is still dysfunctional, and there still isn't a deficit crisis. This is not a new decrease but the end of a temporary increase: food stamps got a bump as part of the [2009 Recovery Act](#). This bump was intended as temporary fiscal stimulus, not a permanent program change, so they gave it an expiration date.

Small comfort if your tight grocery budget just got tighter. Our economic recovery remains [slow and mostly jobless](#). The economy still needs stimulus, and people still need help buying food. Food stamps are exceptionally well suited for both tasks.

I'm aware that I'm walking right into a conservative argument here: Once you've increased an entitlement program's benefits (or expanded eligibility), this becomes the new normal. People receiving benefits get used to it. Liberals move the goalposts accordingly (see above). Where does it end?

They have a point. If the priority is keeping a lid on government spending, then we should be wary of expanding entitlements even a little bit and for very good

reasons. You're moving the status quo in the wrong direction, giving up ground in a long game.

But what if the priority is for families to not be hungry? This week, the private-sector folks who work hard for this cause aren't exactly celebrating the chance to keep even more of this good work local and private. They're saying [they need all the help they can get](#), because lots of Americans are hungry.

Meanwhile, farm bill negotiations are gearing up again. And like the last time we talked about a new farm bill and then didn't get one, [the biggest sticking point is food stamps](#): the House wants to cut them a whole lot; the Senate wants to just cut them a little. That is, [cut them from where they're at today](#), which is already less than yesterday.

Notice the common ground here: food stamps are bad, and there should be less of them. The right wing is [pretty unpopular after the government shutdown debacle](#). But [they've already pretty much won the argument on spending](#). Spending is down; deficits are down. That's great news if you're really into limited government. Not so much if you're hungry.