



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2015

No. 101

House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. FARENTHOLD).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
June 23, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable BLAKE FARENTHOLD to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2015, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

END HUNGER NOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, last Congress, we passed a new farm bill. As a member of the Agriculture Committee, I could not support it, either in committee or on the House floor. I couldn't support it because it cut SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, our Nation's premier antihunger program. I couldn't support a bill that I believed made hunger worse in America.

At the time, members of both parties offered many assurances that the changes to SNAP's relationship with LIHEAP, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, wouldn't hurt SNAP recipients, that the changes were merely "closing a loophole" rather than a true benefit cut.

I was skeptical of those assurances at the time—and with good reason. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the change would reduce benefits for about 850,000 low-income households by an average of \$90 a month in the 14 States and the District of Columbia that took advantage of a State option to link LIHEAP and SNAP. States chose to use this option to alleviate some of the heartbreaking choices that poor families face. Seniors and the disabled are all too often the ones forced to choose between buying food or heating their homes or paying for their prescriptions.

Throughout the farm bill process, antihunger advocates in the "heat and eat" States vigorously opposed the LIHEAP cuts to SNAP, saying their effects would be much greater than the Congressional Budget Office estimates. I'm sorry to say they were right. These cuts are much more than just abstract numbers. We are starting to hear real stories from real people who are seeing their SNAP benefits cut. Hunger is worse in this country because of these cuts.

Take Judy Beals, a disabled senior from Belleville, Wisconsin. Earlier this year, she saw her SNAP benefit cut from \$120 a month to \$16 a month. Let me repeat that, she now gets \$16 a month in food assistance. That is it. That is unconscionable. How could anyone afford to feed themselves for a month on that?

Ms. Beals says she is forced to eat just once a day now that her SNAP benefit has been cut as she tries to figure out how to pay her other bills. To add insult to injury, Ms. Beals found

out that her SNAP benefit had been cut at the register at the grocery store with a full cart of groceries.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Beals' story is not unique. The Hunger Task Force in Milwaukee estimates that, in Wisconsin alone, 255,000 families have seen their SNAP benefits reduced since the LIHEAP cuts went into effect.

We are hearing similar stories in New Jersey, another State that did not extend its heat and eat program. The Food Bank of South New Jersey estimates that 160,000 New Jersey residents have lost about \$90 a month in SNAP benefits due to the farm bill cut.

Now, to be fair, there are several States, including my home State of Massachusetts, that did the right thing and found a way, mostly with State funds, to make up the money lost by the LIHEAP cut in the farm bill. Republican and Democratic Governors stepped up and recognized that those already struggling to put food on the table would be worse off if they didn't find a way to fix the cut. In those States that did not make up the money, we will continue to hear stories of people who have seen their SNAP benefit cut.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to serve on the House Agriculture Committee. Since the beginning of this Congress, the committee has been conducting a top-to-bottom review of the SNAP program. Now, I have no idea where these hearings are going and, once again, we have heard assurances that there will be no cuts in SNAP, but I have this sinking feeling in my stomach that these hearings are not leading to a place that is good for millions of struggling Americans.

The fact is SNAP is a good program. It works. It is effective, and it is efficient. It is one of the most efficiently run Federal programs that exists, with an unbelievably low error rate.

Instead of cutting SNAP or making other harmful policy changes, we

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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