



## NTFB VOICE Advocacy Update

ADVOCATING FOR A HUNGER-FREE, HEALTHY NORTH TEXAS

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### In Brief

- The Administration publishes its Final Rule on ABAWD Waivers - Explained
- Government Shutdown watch, 16 days left
- Census 2020, it's really important!

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### **ABAWD SNAP Waivers**

You may have [seen in the news that something \[washingtonpost.com\]](https://www.washingtonpost.com) is happening to SNAP. I'd like to help explain what is happening. If you still have a question or if I've left something out, please email me.

#### **Let's get some definitions out of the way first:**

ABAWD (Able Bodied Adult Without Dependents) - Adults between the ages of 18-49 who do not have medically classified disabilities or dependents

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) - A federally funded feeding program authorized in the Farm Bill. Program recipients receive monthly benefits loaded onto a debit card for the purchase of food at participating retailers. The federal program also allows for state control of certain policies

Work Requirements - ABAWDs are allowed only 3 months of SNAP benefits every 3 years unless they can prove they are employed, volunteering (approved), or in an employment and training program for at least 20 hours a week.

Waivers - Previously, states have been allowed to waive work requirements for ABAWDs in times of high unemployment (>10%) or in times of insufficient jobs, for the whole state or parts of the state, typically counties. Texas has not had any waivers since 2014, when 3 counties with high unemployment were waived from the work requirements.

#### **What changed?**

A final rule (a way to change policy without bills or Congress) has been published that states that the requirements for state and area waivers for ABAWDs will now change. The proposed rule was published at the beginning of this year and received almost 100,000 comments about the change. The overwhelming majority in opposition to the change.

However, the rule was finalized and has changed to - a state/area must be more than 20% over the national unemployment rate and that the minimum unemployment rate for the state or area must be 6% or higher for two years.

This change will be implemented on April 1, 2020. Until that time, the rule can be challenged in courts.

### **What will change for Texas?**

Nothing...right now. Texas already has strict work requirements in place. It also does not currently have any ABAWD waivers or counties with unemployment rates higher than 10%.

### **So why should we care?**

Three reasons:

1. The method - The rule making process is a way to create policy without the use of Congress. The rule change procedure was meant for minor changes to policy or for emergency situations. The repeated use of this mechanism goes against the thread of a democratically elected legislative body, and that bothers many people for or against any changes in any laws.
2. Our nation - Currently it's estimated that 700,000 people will lose their SNAP benefits under this rule change, and often in areas of the country where unemployment is still high (that's 625 million meals a year nationally).

Studies have shown that work, volunteer, and training requirements do not lead to decreased need for SNAP. SNAP is a nutrition program, not a jobs program. We know that most people who can work, do work. Losing SNAP benefits does not lose the hunger people face, placing a strain on the charitable network to make up the meal gap difference.

3. The Crystal Ball is broken - State flexibility was put into place for times of unexpected economic crisis. Historically, economic disasters can just...happen. The Great Recession of 2007/2008 took many companies, markets and people by surprise. But, when it happened, unemployment sky-rocketed and SNAP responded. Though Texas has no waivers, currently, we've had them in the past. Areas with volatile job markets such as oil fields or coastal corporations reliant on trade, now lose the flexibility to respond to a job market that may unexpectedly disappear.

## **Government Shutdown in 16 Days**

We are there again. The continuing resolution passed last month is about to expire. Please encourage your member of Congress that we need fully funded spending bills passed by December 20th for the 2020 fiscal year.

During the last government shut-down, we all learned how many of our community members are only one paycheck away from hunger.

## **Census 2020**

If current estimates are correct, an accurate count in the 2020 Census would give Texas 3 more members of Congress. That's three more seats in the House of Representatives. Three more votes for/against bills that are important to you.

If you'd like to get more involved in the Census count, please send me an email. I'll tell you how. Also, get excited, the Census will be online this year!

[\[dallasecodev.org\]](http://dallasecodev.org)

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Questions or Comments?

Why don't people fill out their census forms? Tell me why you think...

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