

# Project 21: Food stamp work requirements applauded by Black activists

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## **Work Requirements Encourage Self-Worth, Build on 1996 Welfare Reform Success**

*Washington, DC* - Plans to strengthen the work requirements for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or “food stamps”) assistance eligibility are being applauded by members of the [Project 21](#) black leadership network. This reform is consistent with a recommendation found in the organization’s [“Blueprint for a Better Deal for Black America.”](#)

“People should not be able to become professional entitlement beneficiaries – especially during times of low unemployment. President Trump and the U.S. Department of Agriculture should be commended for wanting to make sure our tax dollars are spent wisely,” said Project 21 member [Emery McClendon](#). “Our government has programs in place to help citizens who fall on hard times. Programs such as SNAP are intended to be temporary. It would greatly enhance those who are enrolled in these programs as well as the communities in which they live if there were work or training requirements linked to continued assistance.”

To “reinforce the... intent” of the [Food and Nutrition Act of 2008](#) and meet the goals of President Donald Trump’s April 2018 [executive order](#) on welfare reform, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a proposed rule today to limit state

waivers on SNAP eligibility. While SNAP requires able-bodied individuals to work 80 hours a month or participate in a job training program to maintain eligibility for benefits, states have been allowed to obtain waivers for extended periods based on local unemployment rates. The [proposed rule](#) seeks to curtail “widespread use” of waivers that the Trump Administration believes were meant for “temporary relief... in an economic downturn.” Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue [said](#) : “Moving people to work is common-sense policy, particularly at a time when the unemployment rate is at a generational low.”

The [proposed rule](#) applies to able-bodied individuals, without dependents, between the ages of 18 and 49. Pregnant women and the disabled are exempt from SNAP work requirements. Waivers to the work requirement may apply to areas with an unemployment rate over 7% (the current national rate is [3.7%](#)).

“If you are able-bodied, government assistance should be a safety net and not a hammock. As someone who was once on food stamps, I know it is necessary. And the exact order addresses the able-bodied without dependents. There is no excuse for those on welfare not trying to help their community or help themselves,” said Project 21 member [Marie Fischer-Wyrick](#). “When I lost a job after 20 years in the workforce, I was on assistance with two dependents. I not only looked for work while on assistance, but I took certification courses to find a better position. I only needed assistance for short time because I knew it was not a way of life for myself or my children.”

Project 21’s [“Blueprint for a Better Deal for Black America”](#) includes several proposals designed to [reduce black unemployment](#), including welfare reform that includes a new work requirement for SNAP. Project 21 made this recommendation to build upon the success of landmark 1996 welfare reform provisions which dramatically reduced welfare rolls while simultaneously encouraging employment and training for millions of Americans.

“For the many times I’m asked for money outside a convenience store in Washington, D.C., this reform is necessary,” said Project 21 member [Derrick Hollie](#). “Getting people into job training and restoring the dignity of work is vital to maintaining our nation’s economic success. That’s why Project 21’s [‘Blueprint for a Better Deal for Black America’](#) prioritized SNAP reform like we are now seeing from the Trump Administration.”

“Working a job or receiving training to get into the workforce can build self-esteem and marketability for those on public assistance,” McClendon added. “We should support this sort of reform because it can improve self-worth and personal responsibility among those receiving entitlements. It’s also a way of making sure our tax dollars are spent wisely. It’s a win-win situation for all Americans.”

To schedule an interview with a member of Project 21 about this issue, contact Judy Kent at (703) 759-0269.

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