USDA rolls out new SNAP cost-of-living adjustments

Advocates say more needs to be done

BY ZOE LEWIS, TYLER SCHMIDT
FOR THE MESSENGER



Zoe Lewis | For The Messenger

William Brandon at Paducah Cooperative Ministry said the organization has had some of the busiest weeks recently as the need for food continues.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program's new cost-of-living adjustments began at the beginning of October. Advocates say the change isn't enough to address the ongoing need for food in Kentucky communities.

The United States Department of Agriculture rolled out the changes for this fiscal year, providing a nearly 3% increase to the maximum monthly amount a SNAP participant could receive. For example, a single-person household could receive up to $306 a month, which is an $8 difference from the previous year.

"While we're appreciative of a cost-of-living adjustment, ultimately, we think that there's more that could be done," said Jordan Ojile, the advocacy manager at Feeding Kentucky.

In Graves County, there were roughly 4,512 people receiving SNAP benefits, stretching across 1,965 households in fiscal year 2024, according to the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, which released its most recent report in January 2025. Total SNAP spending for that year in Graves County was nearly $9.1 million, according to the cabinet.

William Brandon, the community engagement coordinator at Paducah Cooperative Ministry, explains that not every SNAP participant will receive that much money, though.

"What people may not understand about that is those cost-of-living things happen to the max amount that you're able to get," Brandon said. "For a single-family household, you're from about $298 to $306. That's not a ton of money at all, but those are also the max amounts. There are tons of people who don't end up getting the max amount of their food stamps."

Brandon said there's a constant need for food.

"We just see a lot of people that are trying to find any new way to make ends meet or have food on the table, either themselves, their children [or] even their animals," Brandon said. "It's tough these days. We see people struggling."

The new cost-of-living adjustments come more than a year after President Donald Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which cut $186 billion in federal funding from the SNAP program, restructured eligibility and work requirements and changed state cost-sharing for administrative costs. Gov. Andy Beshear said in a letter that more than 80,000 Kentuckians — 20,000 of whom are children — lost SNAP benefits after the Act passed.

"While this cost-of-living adjustment is going to be useful for Kentuckians, there are far too many people who are receiving less than they would have a year ago," Ojile said. "There are certainly a lot more people losing their benefits since all these changes have been enacted."

Ojile said one of their concerns is the large number of children who no longer have SNAP, and how that could affect them in their daily and future lives.

"When you see tens of thousands of children losing their SNAP benefits, that jeopardizes districts all across the state and their ability to provide meals for students at no cost," Ojile said. "Why that concerns us particularly is you've got kids who are losing meals at home because their SNAP benefits are being taken away. You've also got the jeopardy of them losing their meals at school too

Brandon said they have seen more people coming to the food pantry after the cuts and new eligibility work requirements.

"People have to work," Brandon said. "I think that's a common misconception about people on SNAP is that there are no free rides. That ride is not luxurious, and people are having to work just to get benefits…They've taken away exemptions for certain people that may have more difficulties doing those things, so we'll see lots of people that — one different safety net start to get holes in them, that net is not very useful anymore."

Ojile said to fix these issues, the congressional delegation needs to extend the cost shift for SNAP and pass an anti-hunger Farm Bill.

"States need more time in order to implement all of the requirements from H.R. 1. [They] need time to bring down the error rates because far too many of my colleagues across America right now are echoing the same complaint that there's just not enough time to bring down that error rate," Ojile said. "I think it's time for a Farm Bill to address hunger in a very meaningful way. Our food banks need to see more funding for procurement and purchasing. But what's more than that? We'd love to see some really strong language setting up some strong support for SNAP, making good on a lot of the gaps created by H.R. 1 and giving folks that need assistance more of a hand up rather than a handout."

Beshear sent a letter this week to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins and Kentucky's congressional delegation — including Reps. James Comer and Andy Barr, and Sens. Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul — asking for a call to action to alleviate the current situation of SNAP.

Reporters reached out to the legislators above to respond to Beshear's letter. Barr's press team responded with the following statement: "It's no surprise that someone who backed Biden's open borders is complaining that we kicked illegals off SNAP benefits and put Kentuckians first. SNAP should go to struggling Americans, not illegals, and able-bodied adults without kids should work, train, or volunteer for benefits. Andy Barr and Republicans preserved food assistance for the disabled, the elderly, and Kentuckians in need."

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Photos by Josh Bayan | For The Messenger

Volunteers load carts with pet supplies, each cart corresponding with a different regional nonprofit or shelter.



The donation drive collected roughly 6,000 pounds of pet food and other supplies.

Community donates pounds of pet food during 'Paws for a Cause'

Donations aid animal shelters across the region

BY MESSENGER STAFF

Thousands of pounds of cat food, dog food and plenty of other supplies were donated by Paducah community members through the annual "Paws for a Cause" donation drive.

This year donation reached roughly 6,000 pounds of pet food, according to organizer and McCracken County sheriff's deputy Melissa Dillon.

"We partner with Rural King each year, we've done it for the last seven years," she said. "We take up donations from the public for area shelters. And when I say area, we've got shelters from as far as Crittenden County."

Dillon said the donation drive benefits animal shelters regionwide from Crittenden to Ballard County, and even some in southern Illinois, among the many other local shelters such as The McGangsters and McCracken County Humane Society.

She added that none of it would be possible without the support of the community.

"It's fantastic, and every year it just seems to be more and more, and grow more and more," she said. "Our partners here at Rural King have helped us out a whole lot."

She said this year, local businesses such as Texas Roadhouse and Chick-fil-A also contributed to the donation drive.

She thanked the community profusely for their support and Sheriff Ryan Norman for allowing them to hold events like this.

"I just want to say thank you, on behalf of the sheriff's department here today, and Rural King, and all the shelters and rescues that are here today for participating and making this such a successful event," she said. "We look forward to this each year, and the community members step up, and we really appreciate it."

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