

NEWS

U.S. House Republican plan would force states to pay for a portion of SNAP benefits

BY JACOB FISCHLER AND JULIA SHUMWAY, DAILY MONTANAN

The U.S. House Agriculture Committee’s portion of Republicans’ massive taxes and spending bill would partially shift to states the costs of the country’s largest food assistance program, which some experts and Democrats predicted will lead to major cuts in the program — and possibly even an end to it in some states.

The measure will be taken up by the panel Tuesday night and is expected to be voted on late Tuesday or early Wednesday, after which it will be folded into a larger reconciliation package with 10 other bills passed out of committees and sent to the floor. The entire House is set to vote on the legislation before Memorial Day.

The federal government currently pays for all Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, benefits. A provision in the Agriculture Committee’s piece of Republicans’ “big, beautiful bill” to enact President Donald Trump’s agenda would transfer between 5% and 25% of that cost to states, de-

pending on each state’s payment error rate, starting in 2028.

The program provided about \$100 billion in food assistance to nearly 42 million Americans last year, according to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Eligibility currently depends on tests related to income, assets, work requirements and more.

But the change in cost structure could lead states to opt out entirely, said Ty Jones Cox, vice president for food assistance at the left-leaning economic think tank Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, leading some needy families unable to pay for groceries.

“The language is unclear, but it could end SNAP entirely in some parts of the country if states decide the new state funding requirements are impossible for them to meet,” Cox said in a statement late Monday after the bill’s release. “The bill’s massive cuts disguised as ‘cost shifts’ pass the buck to states – but ultimately would leave families holding an empty grocery bag when states aren’t willing or able to backfill for lost federal funds.”

Republicans plan to use the reconciliation

package to permanently extend the 2017 tax law, increase spending on border security and defense by hundreds of billions of dollars, overhaul American energy production, restructure higher education aid and cut spending.

“Our budget reconciliation text restores SNAP to its original intent—promoting work, not welfare—while saving taxpayer dollars and investing in American agriculture,” House Committee on Agriculture Republicans said on X on Monday night.

Funding tied to error rate

Under the bill, states’ responsibility would rise with the broadly defined error rate of payments, which includes fraud as well as paperwork mistakes by a beneficiary or caseworker.

States with an error rate of 6% or less would be responsible for paying 5% of benefits, and those with an error rate higher than 10% would shoulder one-quarter of the cost of benefits.

Two other intermediate categories would exist for states with error rates between 6% and 10%.



Lenora Kenner, center, of Bismarck, talks with attendees of an anti-CO2 pipeline protest at the Capitol in Bismarck on July 27, 2024.

2 lawsuits against Summit allowed to advance; a third case is pending

BY MICHAEL ACHTERLING, NORTH DAKOTA MONITOR

Two North Dakota judges have ruled that lawsuits filed by landowners against carbon pipeline company Summit Carbon Solutions can proceed over objections about court procedures.

Several landowners are suing Iowa-based Summit Carbon Solutions, which is attempting to build a network of pipelines across five states. The pipelines would take carbon dioxide emissions captured at ethanol plants to sites in western North Dakota for permanent underground storage.

Attorneys for Summit had filed motions to dismiss the lawsuits, arguing that not all parties involved were properly notified and that the cases were not filed in the proper court.

South Central Judicial District Court Judge Pam Nesvig issued her ruling Friday rejecting Summit’s arguments in one case in which landowners are suing Summit and the North Dakota Public Service Commission.

South Central Judicial District Court Judge Jackson Lofgren filed

a similar ruling Tuesday in another case in which landowners are suing Summit entities and the North Dakota Industrial Commission.

The Public Service Commission in November granted Summit a permit for its pipeline route, about 333 miles through southeast and south-central North Dakota.

The Industrial Commission in December granted permits for underground permanent storage of carbon dioxide in Oliver, Mercer and Morton counties.

South Central Judicial District Court Judge David Reich has yet to rule on a motion to dismiss in another case where Burleigh County is suing the North Dakota Public Service Commission and Summit Carbon Solutions.

Among the issues raised in the PSC cases is that the agency did not give enough consideration to the safety of residents along the pipeline route. The lawsuit also challenges the PSC’s ruling that state zoning rules trump county zoning ordinances on pipelines.

The PSC ruled last year that a 2019 state law

gives the state the upper hand on pipeline setbacks – such as how far away the pipeline must be from a residence – after Summit said Emons and Burleigh had passed unreasonable set ordinances.

In the Industrial Commission case, landowners contend the state Department of Mineral Resources withheld information about Summit’s models that would predict where the carbon dioxide would move when the gas is pumped underground. The Industrial Commission oversees the Department of Mineral Resources, which recommended approving the storage permits. About 92% of landowners have voluntarily agreed to participate in the storage facility.

In yet another case, the North Dakota Supreme Court heard arguments last month in a challenge to a state law related to underground storage of CO2.

The Northwest Landowners Association and other landowners contend a state law that can force landowners to take part in an underground CO2 storage project through a process called amalgamation is unconstitutional. Summit Carbon Solutions is taking part in the defense of that law along with the state of North Dakota and the Industrial Commission. An attorney for Minnesota Power, who joined the Industrial Commission in arguing to the Supreme Court, said a small percentage of property owners should not be able to deny a majority the right to develop their property.

Summit’s pipelines are planned to connect 57 ethanol plants, including Tharaldson Ethanol at Casselton, to the underground carbon storage sites.

Summit so far has been denied a permit in South Dakota. It has obtained permits in Iowa and for part of its Minnesota route. Nebraska has no state permitting for carbon pipelines.

Supporters of the Summit project say it would support the ethanol industry by lowering the carbon intensity score of the ethanol plants, opening up potential sales in low-carbon fuel markets.

The project would take advantage of federal tax credits promoting carbon sequestration to combat greenhouse gas emissions.



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