



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 159

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JUNE 13, 2013

No. 84

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COOK).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
June 13, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable PAUL COOK 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 3, 2013, 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 each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

THE SNAP CHALLENGE

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, this morning, I, along with many of my colleagues and scores of antihunger advocates, began the SNAP challenge. I will live off of the average SNAP benefit of \$4.50 per day. That's \$31.50 for 7 days. The SNAP challenge is not a new fad diet. It's not a weight loss scheme to get ready for the summer. Rather, it's a way of raising awareness not only how important this program is in combating hunger in America, but also

about how inadequate the benefit truly is.

Being on SNAP is not easy. To qualify, you have to have an income under 130 percent of poverty. That's under \$25,000 for a family of three. Let me repeat that. A family of three has to earn less than \$25,000 to qualify for SNAP. And the average benefit is only \$4.50 a day. That's not much to live off of.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that rent is high, utilities are high, transportation costs are high, and food prices are high. Yet the SNAP benefit is still so inadequate that it typically doesn't even last an entire month. In fact, the average SNAP benefit typically lasts just 21 days out of the month, leaving a family or individual 9 or 10 days without support.

Yesterday, I experienced firsthand how difficult it is to shop on a fixed budget that must be stretched for a fixed amount of time. I'm fortunate enough that I don't have to count every penny when I shop. But with \$31.50 for the week, I didn't have the luxury to buy very many fresh fruits and vegetables, let alone organic ones. It took me a lot longer to shop because I had to make sure that I didn't go over my budget. And I know that my meals will be smaller than they normally are.

Now, don't get me wrong when I talk about my shopping experience and my participation in the SNAP challenge. For me, this challenge will be over in a week. Going into this, I know that I only have to endure this for 7 days. But for millions of hardworking Americans who don't earn enough to make ends meet, they could be on food assistance for a lot longer.

This is not about me and it's not about my colleagues. It's about the program. It's about SNAP and the fact that SNAP works. More than 47 million Americans rely on this program to help put food on their tables. They're not looking for a handout; they're looking for a hand up. Americans are proud and they are industrious.

We like to do things on our own, but we don't turn our backs on people in need. That's one of the things that makes America great. We take care of our own, and that's what SNAP does. It's a way of helping our own—our brothers and our sisters, our children and our seniors, our friends and neighbors, even strangers—and it does so by helping those who simply don't earn enough to make ends meet.

Those of us taking the SNAP challenge are using our positions here to raise awareness of the program. We're using our positions as Members of Congress to tell the American people that SNAP works. We're here to tell our House colleagues not to cut this important program.

This SNAP challenge, starting today and lasting through next Wednesday, will likely coincide with floor consideration of the farm bill. That bill includes \$20.5 billion worth of cuts to SNAP, cuts that will kick 2 million people off of SNAP altogether and 210,000 kids off the free school meal program. And those cuts, if enacted, will come on top of the looming across-the-board SNAP cuts that will happen in November. That cut will result in a family of four receiving \$25 less each month for food.

Now, I believe we can end hunger now if we just find the will to do so. I believe we need White House leadership to do so. I continue to call for a White House conference on food and nutrition to address hunger and nutrition issues in this country. But I also believe this House must do the right thing. This House hasn't held one single hearing about hunger in America or about the SNAP program.

Opponents of SNAP talk about the program being full of fraud, waste, and abuse. It is not true. It is simply not true. Less than 2 percent of ineligible people are actually on SNAP. And for all their bluster, these opponents have never once talked about how to

□ 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.



Printed on recycled paper.

H3359