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# Kansas Farmers Union decries Ag Committee's decision to cut SNAP funding

The U.S. House Agriculture Committee, in a largely symbolic vote opposed by committee Democrats and by anti-poverty groups, voted last week to cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by more than $33 billion over 10 years.

"There is a fine line between justification and abuse of the SNAP program," Donn Teske, Kansas Farmers Union President, said following the committee's vote. "I worry that those who need our help most may fall through the cracks."

The cuts would reduce spending on food stamps that help 46 million Americans buy food by $7.7 billion in the first year, $19.7 billion in five years and the balance in the next five years. The cuts are expected to die in the U.S. Senate.

Food stamps and other federal spending are on the table as budget writers try to craft a plan that avoids about $98 billion in across-the-board, automatic cuts triggered by the failure of the debt-reducing "Super Committee" last year.

Committee members said the cuts would reduce projected costs by about 4 percent for SNAP.

Chairman Frank Lucas said some states qualify all households receiving low-income assistance for SNAP instead of judging eligibility by income or assets. In others, he said, payments as part of a home energy assistance program count as income deductions that allow households to receive higher benefits.

But committee Democrats countered that the cuts would place the burden of debt reduction on programs for poor families.

"I would contend this entire process is a waste of time," Representative Collin Peterson, the committee's top Democrat, said in opening remarks. "Taking a meat ax to nutrition programs that feed millions of hard-working families in an effort to avoid defense cuts is not a serious way to achieve deficit reduction."

A new report from the Center for American Progress looks at the economic consequences of cutting SNAP as the House leadership budget proposal for fiscal year 2013 will likely propose.

Kansas Statistics: A 10 percent cut would mean $44 million less in SNAP payments, 578 fewer jobs, and as many as 27.1 million fewer meals for low-income families in Kansas. Currently 269,710 Kansas residents receive supplemental nutrition assistance, 13.6 percent of Kansas residents live on income below poverty level, and 14.5 percent of Kansas households suffer food insecurity.

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*Kansas Farmers Union is a general farm organization working to protect and enhance the economic interests and quality of life for family farmers and ranchers.*

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