



1. *Budget Cuts for SNAP*
2. *Tolerance on College Campuses*
3. *Has Your Voting Been Influenced by This Popular Fallacy?*

Budget Cuts for SNAP

By JULIA DUPUIS
STAFF WRITER

Among President Trump's proposed budget changes, one stands out as particularly cruel to low-income communities. His plan includes a radical change to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which currently serves more than 43 million Americans. Right now, SNAP recipients receive the full amount of their benefits on electronic cards, which allow them to select from a wide range of foods and shop with their dietary needs in mind.

The Trump administration plans to cut SNAP's budget by nearly 30 percent over the next ten years by giving low-income families pre-packaged boxes of pasta, cereal, peanut butter, and other nonperishable foods. The plan is to replace half of a recipient's total SNAP benefits with the food, leaving them with only half the benefit in cash form.

Not only is his plan vague about the logistics of delivering these boxes, especially to rural communities, but it reveals the fatal flaw that has always been at the heart of the Trump campaign and presidency: He doesn't care about poor people.

Trump's "America's Harvest Box," which he compares to the food delivery service Blue Apron, includes no fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, or poultry. Not only does Blue Apron serve a mostly middle-class to upper-class demographic; it also costs 10 dollars a meal and allows recipients to choose which products they receive.

The average cost per meal of a SNAP recipient is less than two dollars, and under Trump's new proposal, low-income Americans would have no choice of the foods provided to them unless states choose to offer such options. Even though low-income communities already struggle with access to affordable, healthy food options, Trump is exacerbating this issue by force-feeding them processed cereals and canned goods.

For families with severe food allergies and dietary restrictions, this plan could be devastating. Furthermore, families from different cultural backgrounds will lose much of their access to food from local markets and stores, and they will be forced to assimilate to the food administration officials deem as the staples for American life.

Guidelines already restrict what people

can and cannot purchase with federal assistance, and yet low-income people have been subject to scrutiny for decades about their grocery selections. Much of the commentary on the SNAP program has centered around the question: Are poor people selecting items that are more expensive (or more enjoyable) than they deserve?

Living on an average of only 254 dollars in SNAP assistance a month, which amounts to about \$1.40 per meal, these families are already required to make the most economical and healthy decisions possible for their families. It is a necessity for their survival. Nobody is buying steak or lobster when they are struggling to put enough food on the table to feed their children.

And although people on SNAP do spend money on junk food and sweetened beverages such as cookies, snacks, ice cream and soda, there are no major differences in the expenditure patterns of SNAP and non-SNAP households. Poor people should not be held to a higher standard than the rest of the nation when it comes to food decisions, especially not when access to affordable, healthy food is more limited in lower-income areas. SNAP has already established certain policies to encourage healthier options for its recipients. For example, each SNAP dollar goes farther when the card is used at farmer's markets instead of traditional grocery stores.

Fraud in the SNAP program does exist—usually when people trade SNAP benefits for cash or other goods, which is known as food stamp trafficking. In 2017, the rates for SNAP fraud fell to about 1.5 percent. Furthermore, less than 1 percent of SNAP benefits have gone to individuals who were later found to be ineligible.

For a political party that is generally opposed to government involvement in American lives, this seems contradictory to their core beliefs. For low-income families, this plan means allowing the government more control over their daily lives in a very personal and dehumanizing way.

Trump's new SNAP plan operates under the infantilizing assumption that poor people are incapable of making decisions for their own families and that they can't be trusted not to waste

Even though low-income communities already struggle with access to affordable, healthy food options, Trump is exacerbating this issue by force-feeding them processed cereals and canned goods.

Tolerance on College Campuses

By MONTANA SPRAGUE
STAFF WRITER

Tolerance is a frequent topic of conversation in today's culture, particularly on our nation's campuses. It seems that people bend over backwards to convince others, and perhaps themselves, of their own tolerance, taking pride and self-satisfaction in how accepting they are of members of a different race, gender, religion, sexual persuasion, or just about anything. I say "just about" because there is definitely one area where, for many people, there is zero tolerance – politics.

Here is something I discovered a long time ago: Anytime I hope to have the slightest chance to engage in an honest and civil conversation about anything political, it is absolutely imperative that I first qualify myself in a variety of ways in order to preempt the all-too-familiar hair-trigger "counterattack" based on some people's dismissive predispositions, such as: "Where'd you hear that, the *New York Times*?" if I sound liberal, or "Where'd you hear that, Fox News?" if I might sound conservative. The simple truth is that I'm a Dutch and American citizen raised in a very blue state, and I have views on some issues which one might consider left of center.

I have deep concerns for our future in regard to our freedom of choice and our rights of free speech and thought.

It's also true that as the daughter of a man who served in two wars, I have the deepest sense of respect and gratitude toward our military, as well as the policemen and -women who risk their lives every day to protect and serve our country's citizens, despite the rare bad examples that exist in every profession. It is my humble opinion that a country should not have open borders or sanctuary cities. Comments like that cause people to immediately brand me a Republican. My sense is that most listeners, first and foremost, will want to determine whether I am Democrat or Republican, and whether I voted for Hillary or Trump, before they decide

continued on back

SNAP cont.

federal money on frivolous items. Each day on welfare is already a struggle to survive. This is a daily reality that Trump has been distanced from his entire life, and one he will never understand. This lack of insight into the real lives of poor people leads his administration to come up with ideas that are impractical and almost laughable, if not for the serious consequences for millions of Americans.

Trump's new budgeting plan for SNAP is far from "Blue Apron for the poor." At its core, this plan is about depriving low-income people of their already limited control over one of the most basic elements of their day-to-day existence.

TOLERANCE cont.

whether to listen to a word I have to say.

As it happens, I am a registered

Independent and have voted for people from both parties. Honestly, I saw too many character and personality issues in Donald Trump to be comfortable giving him my vote, nor did I support or condone the decades of self-serving dishonesty and abject corruption from Hillary Clinton, along with her years of destroying victims of her husband's alleged sexual assaults and other unconscionable behavior. My own opinion is that Trump would probably never have been elected at any other time in our history, and that Hillary Clinton may very well be the only candidate the Democrats could have found who was flawed enough to lose to him. So like it or not, Trump won 2,622 out of the 3,112 counties in 2016.

I am still a teenager, but I have deep concerns for our future in regard to our freedom of choice and our rights of free speech and thought. When I learned a

year ago that I was accepted to Hamilton College, I ran across an article written by a senior about conservative students being harassed by other students and even some professors. I am happy to say I have not experienced that here, but other colleges are not so tolerant. Examples of this intolerance elsewhere include posting pictures of conservatives seemingly in order to increase harassment of them. Then there are tweets like the one from journalist Jesse Farrar, who said professors should "hold the conservative students heads under water until they stop breathing."

After explaining my reasons, and my qualifications as someone who cannot be pigeonholed and therefore immediately dismissed, I am usually able to obtain "permission" from people I try to engage in a political discussion. It is just unfortunate that anyone should have to.

Has Your Voting Been Influenced by This Popular Fallacy?

By MICHAEL LaPORTE
STAFF WRITER

This year's election campaigns have only just started, but if you're like most American voters, you may well end up deciding against the few candidates whose positions are actually closest to yours. The reason? You just might be misled by a widespread voting fallacy deeply entrenched in our political culture.

You probably don't agree with the Republican or Democratic Party on everything. After all, their positions aren't logically connected: just because you agree with them on one issue doesn't give you any reason to agree with them on another. (What's the logical connection between supporting same-sex marriage and opposing school vouchers? Opposing abortion and supporting the farm bill?) Luckily for you, however, the Republican and Democratic parties aren't the only two games in town. There are dozens of ballot-qualified political parties around the country—the Moderate Party, American Reform Party, Justice Party, Women's Equality Party—and it's likely that at least one of these minor parties

will match your views more closely than the either of the two major ones.

Many Republican voters of our generation, for example, have views that really align more closely with the Libertarian Party than with the socially traditionalist Republican Party. Similarly, many younger Democratic voters actually turn out to be

... even though there are many third-party candidates who match most voters' views more closely than either the Republican or Democratic candidates, very few people end up voting third party

closer to the Green Party, which has basically the same positions as the Democratic Party on all the major issues, but places a higher priority on environmental issues like climate change. Yet even though there are many third-party candidates who match most voters' views more closely than either the Republican or Democratic candidates, very few people end up voting third party, and for largely the same, familiar reasons.

In the last two years, who has not heard "I honestly would have preferred a third-party candidate to Hillary [or Trump], but we just can't let Trump [or Hillary] win, so I'm not going to throw away my vote to a third-party candidate who we know

doesn't stand a chance of winning." This is a very popular view, but unfortunately it is also, as economists can tell you, fallacious.

In national elections, economists and some political scientists who consider such issues say, your one vote makes effectively zero difference, so it's irrational to vote for the purpose of shaping the election's outcome. It doesn't make much sense to speak of a "wasted vote," because your vote wouldn't have mattered anyway. This doesn't necessarily mean you shouldn't vote at all, since there are powerful moral reasons to vote. But it does mean that if your goal is to influence the outcome of the election, then voting third party, voting major party, and not voting are equally rational in economic (in the sense of strictly self-interested) terms.

One might object that your vote does matter, because if everyone agreed that voting was irrational and didn't vote, then voter turnout would be even more dismal than current levels. However, the impact of your individual vote doesn't increase with the addition of other votes. Besides, a third-party voter could respond that if everyone were equally rational, a third-party candidate would win every time!

There are two possibilities: your vote makes a significant difference to the outcome or it doesn't. If it does, then by voting third party you will make a significant difference—you won't be wasting your vote. If it doesn't, then you are still not wasting your vote, since it doesn't matter anyway.

Voting is not exactly rocket science, but that does not mean it is irrational. As the midterms approach, let's keep those famous words of Hunter S. Thompson in mind: "anything worth doing, is worth doing right."

ENQUIRY

vol. V

Sam Benevelli
Editor-in-Chief

Claire Anastasia Kitz
Andrew Juchno
Associate Editors

Helen Sternberg
Layout Editor

STAFF WRITERS

Julia Dupuis
Eric Fischer
Elza Harb

Michael LaPorte
Fred Pollevick
Montana Sprague
Allison Zuckerman

The opinions expressed in these articles are the views of their authors and do not represent the views of Enquiry or the Alexander Hamilton Institute.

Enquiry accepts articles of 500 to 800 words at sbenevel@hamilton.edu. Please be aware that we do not accept anonymous submissions.

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

1. Budget Cuts for SNAP
#SNAPCuts
2. Tolerance on College Campuses
#CampusTolerance
3. Has Your Voting Been Influenced by This Popular Fallacy?
#VoteThirdParty