News

Archbishop Timothy Broglio

Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, delivers his reflection during the annual prayer service for United Nations diplomats at Holy Family Church in New York City Sept. 8. (OSV News/Gregory Shemitz)

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The president of the U.S. bishops' conference has urged lawmakers to fund federal food assistance before a looming deadline risks disrupting benefits for more than 40 million people.

The Trump administration said benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, would not be issued starting on Nov. 1 if the federal government shutdown remains in effect.

About 42 million Americans rely on SNAP. Data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture showed that in fiscal year 2023, 79% of SNAP recipient households included either a child, an elderly individual or a nonelderly individual with a disability.

Archbishop Timothy Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in a statement released late Oct. 28 the group is "deeply alarmed that essential programs that support the common good, such as SNAP, may be interrupted."

"This would be catastrophic for families and individuals who rely on SNAP to put food on the table and places the burdens of this shutdown most heavily on the poor and vulnerable of our nation, who are the least able to move forward," said the prelate, who heads the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services. "This consequence is unjust and unacceptable."

On its website, the USDA posted a notice that said, "Bottom line, the well has run dry. At this time, there will be no benefits issued November 01." The message blamed Senate Democrats for the ongoing stalemate.

Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins told Fox News Oct. 28 that the department "does not have the $9.2 billion that it would require" to fund the program.

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"Unless Democrats vote to END their shutdown, food stamp recipients will not receive their benefits beginning on Saturday," the White House's rapid response social media account said.

In a post on X, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. said, "Millions of hungry families are about to lose SNAP benefits to buy food."

"There are $5 billion in emergency funds that could be used right now to ensure parents and kids don’t go hungry when SNAP runs out this Saturday," he said. "But Donald Trump has ordered them not to use this funding."

A coalition of 25 states and the District of Columbia states sued the Trump administration in an attempt to keep the program running.

In his statement, Broglio added, "The U.S. bishops have consistently advocated for public policies that support those in need."

"I urgently plead with lawmakers and the Administration to work in a bipartisan way to ensure that these lifesaving programs are funded, and to pass a government funding bill to end the government shutdown as quickly as possible,” he said.