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by Brian Roewe

NCR environment correspondent

[View Author Profile](#)

[broewe@ncronline.org](mailto:broewe@ncronline.org)

Follow on Twitter at [@brianroewe](https://twitter.com/brianroewe)

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A proposed farm bill tying more stringent work requirements to the federal food assistance program fell flat Friday in the House of Representatives.

The bill, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018, was defeated by a 213-198 vote. Thirty Republicans, many members of the House Freedom Caucus, joined all House Democrats in voting against the bill. According to [numerous reports](#), the Freedom Caucus opposition had little to do with the farm bill itself but more with forcing a vote on separate immigration legislation.

It is unclear if the House will attempt to revive its farm bill. A Senate version of a farm bill is also in development, led by Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kansas) but is believed to be absent some of the House bill's more controversial components. The current farm bill will expire in September.

"This is a big victory," Dominican Sr. Quincy Howard, government relations fellow for Network, the Catholic social justice lobby, said in a statement. She added the "highly partisan legislation would have had devastating effects" on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as SNAP or food stamps, which she called

"one of our nation's most effective safety-net programs."

"As people of faith, we are called to care for our neighbors, not make food security worse for them," Howard said.

Under the House farm bill, which provides billions of dollars in subsidies for farmers, SNAP funding was set to decrease \$20 billion over the next 10 years. In addition, it would have attached to receiving the food assistance, approximately \$126 a month per person, stricter work requirements — for able-bodied adults, a minimum of 20 hours a week working on a job or in a training program.

First-time violators of that requirement would be barred a year from SNAP benefits, with repeat violators restricted from access for three years. Currently, able-bodied adults without dependents and under age 50 must spend at least 80 hours a month working or in education or training programs, or be limited to accessing SNAP benefits three months in a three-year span. States with high unemployment rates can apply for a waiver to the SNAP time limit.

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Approximately 44.2 million people participated in the SNAP program each month in fiscal year 2016, [according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture](#), with two-thirds of them children, elderly or persons living with disabilities.

According to [a report by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office](#), the new work rules would have resulted in 1.2 million adults per month losing access to SNAP benefits, with nearly two-thirds of those people in households with children. The bill would also result in an estimated 265,000 fewer children a year qualifying for free meals at school.

In her statement, Howard called out Rep. Mike Conaway (R-Texas), lead sponsor of the bill, and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-Wisconsin), saying they "should be ashamed of their draconian proposal." President Donald Trump also supported the inclusion of the work requirements in the bill.

Last week, Howard joined other faith leaders and Democratic representatives [in a prayer service opposing the bill](#) and calling for a recommitted protection of SNAP.

While Friday's vote leaves the \$867 billion House bill with an uncertain future, Howard said their work isn't over yet. She said Congress can now work toward a

bipartisan farm bill that reduces food insecurity while protecting and strengthening SNAP.

"[Network] will continue to push Congress to renounce extreme proposals and promote the common good in our country," she said.

[Brian Roewe is an NCR staff writer. His email address is [broewe@ncronline.org](mailto:broewe@ncronline.org). Follow him on Twitter: [@BrianRoewe](https://twitter.com/BrianRoewe).]

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