

89.3 KPCC Southern California Publix Radio

GOP food stamp bill would cut off 350,000 Californians

Jed Kim | September 20th, 2013, 7:09pm



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The bill passed by House Republicans Thursday that would cut nearly \$40 billion from the food stamp program would eliminate benefits for 350,000 people in California.

"That's a lot of people, and it's a lot of people at a time when the unemployment rate is still very high," said Kerry Birnbach, a nutrition policy advocate for the [California Food Policy Advocates](#). "These cuts are the largest cuts we've seen proposed in SNAP in recent history. They would be very damaging."

SNAP is the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#), the official name of the Food Stamp program. In Los Angeles County alone, more than 1.1 million people receive benefits from CalFresh, the state's name for the food stamp program.

A man who identified himself only as Kenny said he's been receiving \$200 in food stamps every month for about a year.

On Friday afternoon, he was outside the county social services office in Glendale, waiting for the money to show up on his Electronic Benefit Card.

Kenny, who is unemployed said he is looking for work as a certified welder or as a chef. California normally requires that CalFresh participants put in a minimum number of hours of work, but that rule is temporarily on hold because of the difficult job market. If passed, the new bill would reinstate work requirements, which Kenny said is unreasonable.

"It defeats the purpose of giving out food stamps if you're employed," he said.

The bill is heading to the Senate for debate. Regardless of the outcome, Californians will feel a reduction in benefit payouts on November 1, when extra funds that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act had injected into SNAP expire.