

Tougher 'Able-Bodied' Work Rules Expected for Benefits

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President Trump unveils his first detailed budget plan on Tuesday, and word leaking out in advance suggests he wants big cuts for Medicaid and food stamps. The *Washington Post* reports that Trump's budget slashes Medicaid by \$800 billion over 10 years, meaning he's on board with the House vision to reverse former President Obama's expansion of the program to pay for health care. The Congressional Budget Office previously estimated such a cut would cause about 10 million people to lose benefits. Other items:

- **Food stamps:** The plan cuts \$193 billion from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the modern version of food stamps, over the next 10 years, reports the *AP*. That's a cut of more than 25%, one that would be achieved in part by tightening eligibility. The program serves about 44 million people, up from 28 million people in 2008. Critics say it's time to roll back the aid now that the financial crisis is over.
- **Work requirements:** Trump plans to give states more flexibility in imposing work requirements for "able-bodied" people who collect a variety of anti-poverty benefits.
- **Social Security, Medicare:** These retirement benefits are safe from cuts, but *Axios* reports that CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) and SSDI (disability insurance) are not. Cuts to federal pensions and farm subsidies also are in the works.
- **The wall:** Trump's budget includes \$1.6 billion for a wall along the Mexican border, part of a \$2.6 billion increase in border security, reports the *Hill*.
- **Balanced budget:** The Trump plan envisions a balanced budget in a decade, though that relies on a robust economic growth of 3% and passage of the GOP's ObamaCare alternative.
- **From the left:** "The indications are strong this budget will feature Robin-Hood-in-reverse policies [on] an unprecedented scale," says Robert Greenstein of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- **Counterpoint:** "We're not seeing the type of gains we should be seeing for all that spending, and that would suggest [it's] time to reform the system," says Michael Tanner of the libertarian Cato Institute. He was referring to an estimated \$680 billion to \$800 billion the US spends annually on anti-poverty programs.