

# South Bend Tribune

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**OPINION** *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

## Viewpoint: Bad policy

**Cheryl Ashe** South Bend Tribune

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Indiana will cut off thousands of able-bodied adults without dependents from their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits beginning in July. An estimated 65,000 Hoosiers will be affected by this policy change, but few people are aware of it. Gov. Mike Pence announced late last year that Indiana would join the seven other states that have enacted this change.

Federal law established work requirements for able-bodied SNAP recipients without dependents in 1996 with The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. However, Indiana suspended these requirements beginning in 2009 because the state qualified for a labor surplus waiver. Indiana has qualified for the waiver each year since and could have had a waiver for 2015 due to unemployment numbers. Pence chose not to keep the waiver. Able-bodied adults without dependents will be limited to three months of SNAP benefits within a 36-month period unless they work an average of 20 hours per week, participate in an approved unemployment and training program an average of 20 hours per week, or do a combination of both.

Indiana's Family and Social Services Administration promises that, current SNAP clients who will have work requirements going forward will receive notice in the mail in May prior to the effective date of the reestablishment of the work requirements.

This policy change will greatly impact individuals employed in food service businesses. Research reveals that each year many fast-food and other restaurant businesses reduce or lay off employees from January through mid-March. Having reduced hours for that many weeks may cause individuals to lack the yearly average

of 20 hours a week of employment. Most food service jobs are part-time and pay less than \$8 per hour, according to salary.com. This policy change will unfairly harm the working poor and cause them to go unnecessarily hungry. Two University of Notre Dame students, Erin Walters and Sean Hamilton, helped me research this policy.

Pence did not have to enact this policy change. Tell him to accept the waiver offered by the federal government. Write, call or email him at: Office of the Governor, Statehouse, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2797; 317-232-4567; [www.in.gov/gov/2333.htm](http://www.in.gov/gov/2333.htm).

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**Cheryl Ashe lives in South Bend.**