



ETERNAL VIGILANCE ACTION

Policy Briefing Memorandum

Subject: Using the Revenue Shortfall Reserve to Bridge SNAP Funding During the Federal Shutdown

Overview

The ongoing federal government shutdown threatens to interrupt Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for roughly 1.4 million Georgians beginning in November 2025. Because SNAP is 100 percent federally funded, a prolonged shutdown would halt benefit disbursements, jeopardizing food security for families and local economies.

Georgia currently maintains more than \$5.5 billion in its Revenue Shortfall Reserve (RSR) and approximately \$9 billion in undesignated surplus. The RSR exists to sustain essential services when external revenue shortfalls occur. A federal shutdown qualifies as such an event. This memo outlines a legally sound and fiscally conservative option to bridge the gap until federal appropriations resume.

Recommendation

Establish a temporary State Emergency Nutrition Assistance Program (SENAP), administered by the Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). This program would provide emergency food stipends to SNAP households during the federal funding lapse, funded by an RSR release authorized by the Governor under O.C.G.A. § 45-12-93.

Program Framework

- Implementing Agency: Georgia DFCS
- Funding Source: Revenue Shortfall Reserve (RSR)
- Initial Funding Cap: \$300 million (approx. one month of SNAP benefits)
- Duration: Active during the federal lapse; terminates within 15 days of restoration
- Mechanism: State-coded EBT deposits matching recent SNAP benefit levels
- Repayment: Federal reimbursements restore RSR balance upon resumption of funds

Fiscal and Legal Rationale

The RSR may be released to “make up shortages that might occur in revenue collections” (O.C.G.A. § 45-12-93). The Governor’s authority allows use of RSR funds above the 4 percent statutory floor for emergencies. Framing the effort as a state-administered emergency program ensures compliance with Georgia law and allows later reimbursement from federal funds.

Implementation Steps

1. Legal confirmation from OPB and Attorney General on RSR authority.
2. Governor issues executive order authorizing DHS/DFCS to establish SENAP.
3. DFCS prepares EBT systems for state-coded payments.
4. OPB releases up to \$300 million from RSR when SNAP funding lapses.
5. Federal reimbursements replenish RSR upon restoration.

Messaging and Public Communication

Effective communication will be essential to the success of any state-funded bridge program. The rollout should be framed not as an expansion of government spending, but as **an act of responsible governance in the face of federal dysfunction**. The message is simple: *Georgia is governing responsibly while Washington fails to act*. By stepping in temporarily to protect vulnerable families, Georgia demonstrates fiscal discipline, compassion, and competence. Messaging should emphasize that this is a **measured, temporary intervention** using funds that the state prudently saved for moments of true need, not a permanent assumption of federal obligations. Clear, consistent public statements from the Governor and State leadership will be critical to maintaining public confidence and preventing misinformation about program scope, eligibility, or duration.

Conclusion

The proposed SENAP is a lawful, responsible, and rapid mechanism to maintain food security during the federal shutdown. It demonstrates Georgia's leadership in protecting citizens while preserving fiscal stability.