

OPINION

EDITORIAL

SNAP benefits need full funding

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About 184,000 Long Islanders receive benefits through the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, according to the region's largest food banks.

Those individuals then spend what used to be called food stamps — amounting to more than \$40 million a month — at local grocery stores and supermarkets.

Without fully funded benefits, Long Islanders are struggling to make ends meet, and area businesses — particularly smaller grocers — are missing expected revenue. Federal employees, including active military personnel, many of whom already received benefits through SNAP and now wonder whether their next paychecks will come, could feel a double impact. And while the Trump administration initially suggested Monday it would halfway fund SNAP for November, even that became uncertain when President Donald Trump said Tuesday he'd only provide the benefits if the government reopened.

Food banks, charities or generous restaurant owners cannot ever fully meet the need. Nonetheless, many gracefully are trying to do their part. For the first time, Long Island Cares and Island Harvest — the region's

two food banks — came together Monday at Farmingdale State College to distribute food for dozens of federal workers lined up in their cars. Rep. Tom Suozzi summarized the effort well. "We just have to take care of people in difficult times," he said. Nassau County Executive Bruce A. Blake-man announced the county would provide an additional \$50,000 weekly to the two organizations to help. And Suffolk County Executive Edward P. Romaine is implementing a new



Some 184,000 Long Islanders are part of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

BY NANCY Y. FUHR

voucher system to directly provide SNAP recipients with some relief.

Restaurants are stepping up, too. Struggletown BBQ in Mount Sinai is offering free food and Thanksgiving meals to those with SNAP cards; the Clay Oven in Hauppauge is offering meals to 20 families a day, no questions asked.

Anyone who's individually able can help, too, just by donating directly to licares.org or islandharvest.org.

Crises like these bring out the good in Long Island, illustrating that we can still come together despite our deep divides. State breakdowns of SNAP benefits by congressional district illustrate how food insecurity bleeds through political lines. There are more SNAP recipients in the Island's two Republican-led districts than in the two led by Democrats.

But the immediate solution is fully funding SNAP. The Trump administration's initial insufficient partial effort came in response to two federal judges who ruled the administration had to pay into the program. But the confusing rhetoric since leaves Long Islanders in need with more questions than answers. It'll take time for residents to receive the benefits — but no one knows how long. And once the money does flow, no one knows how much they'll get.

The administration must use available contingency dollars to fully fund SNAP. But that, too, is just a temporary fix. Keeping the government shuttered has real-world implications that mushroom every day, for individuals and their families, and for the larger economy. Until the shutdown ends, there's likely more pain to come.



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LETTERS

LIRR discipline tilts in favor of some

When will taxpayers or elected officials hold the Long Island Rail Road accountable? After 24 years of asking the same question, the answer appears to be "never" ["Watchdog: 36 LIRR workers in time fraud scheme," News, Oct. 23].

This latest outrage, in which employees cloned ID cards to steal wages, is so egregious that nothing short of independent hearings would be sufficient to root out the incompetence that thrives at the LIRR.

Can any other organization consistently claim to be working toward accountability and continually fail without consequence? Apparently, theft of wages is condoned, but employees testing positive for marijuana metabolites while not at work becomes an economic

death sentence ["Worker sues for back pay in test of LIRR pot policy," Aug. 26, 2024].

The LIRR was quick to excessively discipline electricians Ronald Dolginko and Darren Drew, both long-tenured employees with immaculate records, while allowing 36 employees to defraud taxpayers for 36 months.

They say crime does not pay; I disagree. It certainly pays if you work on the LIRR, where discipline and forgiveness depend on who you know and the labor organization that represents you.

Accountability and discipline should be evenly applied. What a novel thought.

— **RICARDO SANCHEZ, PATCHOGUE**
The writer retired as general chairman of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 589.

Hochul's climate choices under fire

Gov. Kathy Hochul appears to be buckling under pressure from President Donald Trump on climate policy ["Push for reset on climate goals," News, Nov. 2].

She is now considering greenlighting several fracked gas pipelines pushed by Trump and his Northeast Supply Enhancement fossil fuel allies. Two of the pipelines — the Williams NESE pipeline and the Constitution Pipeline — were both soundly rejected by New York State years ago. These projects, if constructed, would essentially gut the state's climate action initiatives mandated by New York's 2019 CLCPA, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

Our governor, given the deep climate crisis we are