



PHOTO BY BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

## Congress: Provide a Basic Needs Allowance for Military Families Facing Food Insecurity

### What Is the Basic Needs Allowance?

The proposed allowance would give an estimated \$400 monthly subsidy to servicemembers with a household gross income (not including the Basic Allowance for Housing, or BAH) at or below 130% of the poverty line. The subsidy is meant to ensure no military family faces food insecurity.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates around **10,200 servicemembers would benefit from the allowance**. It would cost \$175 million from 2021 through 2024, according to CBO projections — a little less than \$44 million per fiscal year.

Servicemembers (primarily junior enlisted) would not rely on the program for extended periods, instead receiving temporary assistance during difficult financial times. It also would alleviate the need for them to participate in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), thus making the overall program cost minimal when compared with the DoD budget.

### Why Is It Needed?

Many military families in need do not qualify for SNAP because it includes BAH in its calculation of gross income. This has led thousands of families to seek help from food pantries. The Armed Services YMCA,

one of the top food pantry providers at military installations, reports a 400% increase in demand during the pandemic. The mental and physical impacts of food insecurity impact a servicemember's ability to do their job, compromising military readiness.

Additionally, DoD has spent billions of dollars looking into obesity in the military, increasing the recruitment pool, and Total Force Fitness. Food insecurity plays a part in all of these; this change could potentially save dollars spent addressing these issues.

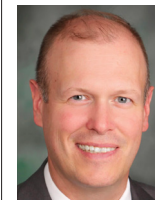
### So, why not just fix SNAP?

Asking for help has a stigma for those moving up the ranks; the last thing a servicemember wants is the scrutiny over whether they are ready to lead others if they have "financial troubles." This is ultimately a DoD compensation problem, not a SNAP problem. "No one wants to see a servicemember on food stamps" said one DoD senior leader: An allowance automatically tied to family income and the local poverty line would remove the need to ask for help.

For more about SNAP participation among servicemembers and MOAA's concerns with the 14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation report on this topic, visit [MOAA.org/foodinsecurity](http://MOAA.org/foodinsecurity).

## You Can Help: Cosponsor S. 1488/ H.R. 2339

- We are seeking bipartisan support for our military families facing food insecurity. Your cosponsorship of this legislation will help us secure this bill in the FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act.
- Support for military families. Will you join us and the coalition of more than 35 military and veterans service organizations committed to passing this legislation?
- These organizations endorse this legislation and represent millions of Americans: The Military Coalition, Mazon, Blue Star Families, The White Oak Collaborative, and other partners.



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