

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Changes will be felt

The government giveth and the government taketh away. That's apparently what's happening to SNAP recipients. Some recipients of SNAP, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, saw their benefits Oct. 1 increase slightly to reflect the cost of living. On Nov. 1, most recipients will see their benefits decrease due to the end of the extra benefits provided by the federal government during the recession.

What? An increase for some and just a month later a decrease for most. It's the kind of government action that leads to frustration, anger and bewilderment.

And it leads us to wonder just what the two changes cost in administration. That money could have been pumped into the SNAP system had these changes been all at once. And wouldn't it have made more sense to make one change so recipients wouldn't have more than their normal benefit one month and just a month later less than their normal benefit?

The amount of SNAP benefits each eligible household receives depends on a variety of factors, according to the Minnesota Department of Human Services. Those factors include income, household size and household expenses.

On Nov. 1, a family of four with no income and no other changes to their case may see a decrease in monthly benefits by about \$36, according to DHS.

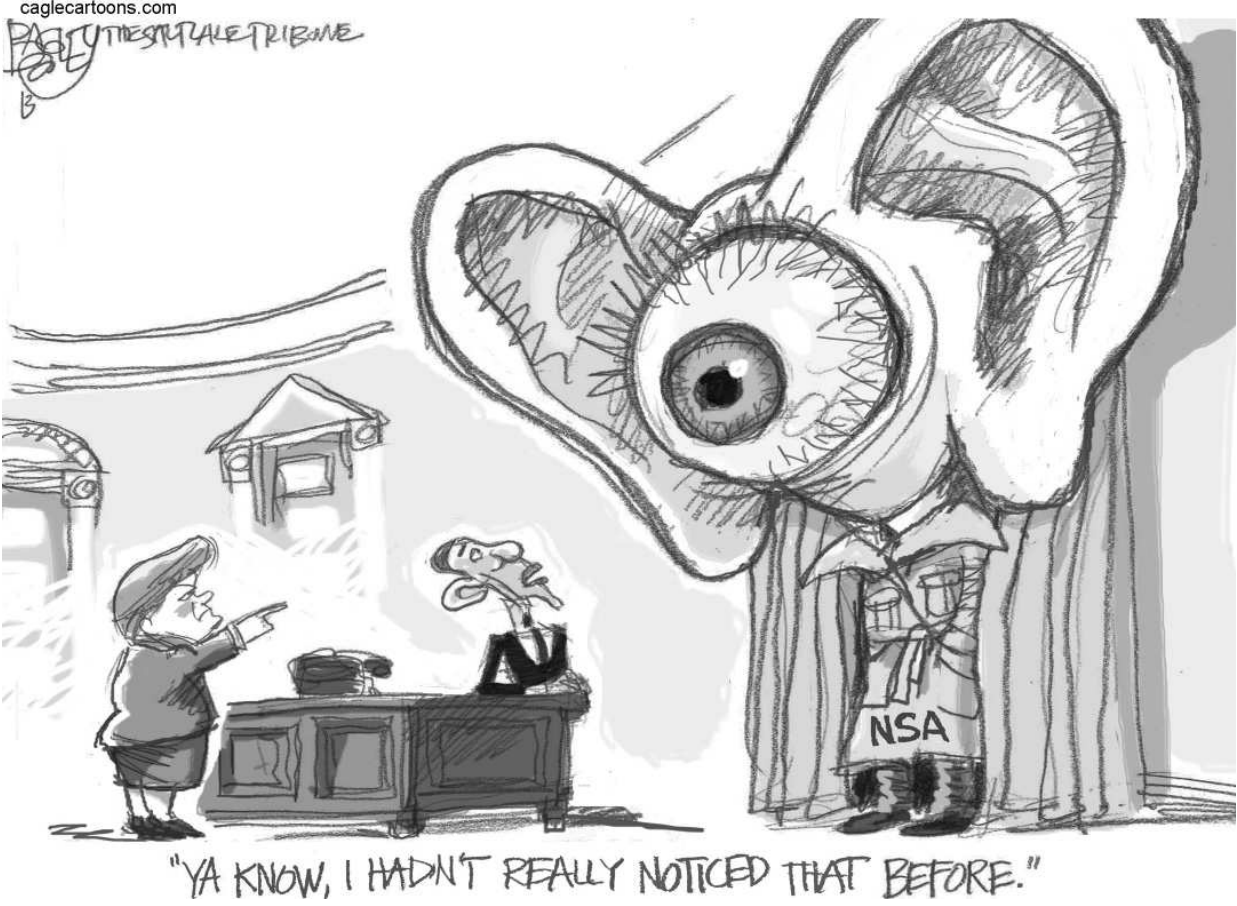
And while that may not seem like a lot of money to some of us, but for others it's the difference between purchasing and eating nutritional meals or going without.

There is help for people who will experience this decrease in benefits. DHS offers non-financial resources to supplement SNAP recipient's budgets. Those resources show how to stretch food dollars through food budgeting, selection and low-cost recipes. That information can be found by calling the Minnesota Food Helpline, 1-888-711-1151. It is operated by Hunger Solutions Minnesota, in partnership with DHS.

These SNAP changes are likely to lead to more reliance on area food shelves, which often fill the gap between SNAP benefits and the reality of grocery bills.

Clearly, this community will feel this change in SNAP benefits and we urge all who can to help keep stock the Falls Hunger Coalition's Food Shelf and The Salvation Army's Emergency Food Pantry.

These two resources serve this community well and deserve our support, especially as the winter months and holidays approach.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Board should consider PSEO students

To the editor,
An open letter to the ISD 361 School Board,
The ISD 361 School Board voted (Oct. 21) to implement weighted grades to benefit some of the International Falls High School students, and to withhold that benefit to students enrolled in the Post-Secondary Education Option, which allows students to take college level classes at Rainy River Community College for high school and college credit. A similar option, Concurrent Enrollment, allows students to take college level classes in the high school environment. PSEO students, like myself, are still part of the high school; we participate in sports, band, and other activities. We can still take classes at FHS, seek counseling and advice from administration, and we must achieve FHS graduation standards to receive a diploma. Grade weighting is a practice meant to encourage students to take rigorous courses that challenge us and discourage the practice of taking an “easy A” course. For instance, if we took a college level algebra

course taught in the high school and got a 3.5 (an A- or a B+), another .5 points would be added to the score and we would have the weighted score of 4.0 – a perfect A; if another student took an easier course and they received the same grade (a 3.5), it would remain a 3.5. The highest score possible goes from a 4.0 to a 4.5.

Where this goes all wrong for some of us is when the board chose to apply this weighted grading system for only some of the students. They chose to discriminate against those of us who chose to participate in their PSEO. Although the courses at the college are obviously college level, advanced beyond high school courses and very rigorous educationally (exactly what the board says they are encouraging in the weighted system) they will not work with RRCC to weigh our classes. We are being discriminated against because even with a perfect score – a 4.0 — we could not hope to catch our fellow classmates who are being granted an extra .5 for doing equivalent work. The board

rigged the system so we will not have the opportunity be at top of our class. In fact, because of their vote, my class ranking will plummet from a tie for No. 1 to something much lower, with no hope of ever catching up. This changes our class ranking for graduation and for scholarships.

I have met with administration; presented my case with support from my PSEO peers to the board; conducted research and contacted the Minnesota Department of Education who assures me that there are absolutely no rules or regulations as to why FHS refuses to weigh the RRCC PSEO courses. They voted without even a second thought to me or the more than 50 FHS students they were disabling with their decision. am not for or against weighted grades – I am for equality and against discrimination.

I ask the board respectfully, once again, to consider including the PSEO courses in your weighted grading system.

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