

AIRTALK

Weekdays 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
with Larry Mantle

AirTalk for January 27, 2014

More of the working-poor and job-seekers are receiving food stamps

AirTalk | January 27th, 2014, 10:28am



Kevork Djansezian/Getty Images

Gracie Shannon-Sanborn, 5, holds a sign as she joins her father Allen Sanborn (L) and members of Progressive Democrats of America and other activists as they hold a rally in front of Rep. Henry Waxman's office on June 17, 2013 in Los Angeles, California. The protestors were asking the congressman to vote against a House farm bill that would reduce federal spending on the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program by \$20.5 billion and affect food stamps and other services for the poor.

American adults ages 18 to 59 have surpassed children and the elderly to become the largest group of food stamp recipients for the first time in history. Higher unemployment, stagnant wages and a loosening of eligibility requirements have driven more working-age adults into the program, officially known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP.

The largest group of food stamp recipients now covers both unemployed Americans and the working poor who struggle to bridge the widening gulf between low-wage and high-skill jobs.

The increase brings up the question of whether the government's \$80 billion-a-year food stamp program will start shrinking anytime soon. Congress is debating making cuts to the program that could take \$4 billion out of the budget each year.

Should working age Americans have access to food stamps? Should having a job in today's economy guarantee you can afford to buy food? What can be done to address the root problems of unemployment and income inequality?

Guests:

Kerry Birnbach, Nutrition Policy Advocate at the California Food Policy Advocates, a statewide public policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food.

Michael Tanner, Senior fellow at the Cato Institute, a think tank that describes itself as focusing on individual liberty, limited government, free markets and peace.

James Ziliak, Economist and Director of the Center for Poverty Research at the University of Kentucky, who did the analysis for the AP report

Tarini Parti, Agriculture Reporter at POLITICO