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46,609,072 People on Food Stamps in 2012; Record 47,791,996 in December

Nearly a quarter of the people living in Washington, D.C. are on the program.

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On Friday, the United States Department of Agriculture quietly released new statistics related to the food stamps program, officially known as SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). The numbers reveal, in 2012, the food stamps program was the biggest it's ever been, with an average of 46,609,072 people on the program every month of last year. 47,791,996 people were on the program in the month of December 2012.

The federal government also says that in a given month in 2012, the number of households on food stamps was 22,329,713.

The state with the highest average number of participants per month in 2012 was Texas, with an astonishing 4,038,440 folks drawing from the program. The second highest is California, with 3,964,221, and then Florida, at 3,353,064.

Washington, D.C., with an estimated population of 617,996, had an average of 141,147 participants. Meaning, roughly 23 percent of folks living in D.C. are on food stamps, according to the numbers provided by the federal government. The participation rate in Texas, which has an estimated population of 26,059,203, 15.5 percent.

The state with the lowest number of participants in the program was Wyoming, with 34,347 out an estimated population of 576,412.

Over the weekend, Senator Jeff Sessions, the top Republican on the Senate Budget Committee, said that the Obama administration is encouraging growth in the food stamps program as a way to stimulate the economy.

"Amazingly, the federal government says that the more people we have on food stamps, the more it grows the economy. The Department of Agriculture proudly declares: 'Each \$5 in new [food stamp] benefits generates almost twice that amount in economic activity for the community.' Our government is running food stamp promotions at foreign embassies. One worker was given an award for overcoming 'mountain pride' and getting more people to sign up. Where I grew up in Alabama, all honest work, even the hardest, was honored. And pride, self-respect, and a desire to be independent was valued, not a thing to be overcome," said Sessions, who delivered the weekly Republican address.

Sessions also pointed out that cities like Baltimore, which he said have have been "governed by liberal policies for decades," see particularly high numbers of participation in the program.

"Despite this fountain of federal funds, 1 in 3 children still live in poverty in our nation's capital. Two in three children live in single parent homes. In nearby Baltimore--another city governed by liberal policies for decades--1 in 3 residents are on food stamps and in 1 in 3 youth live in poverty. Americans are committed to helping our sisters and brothers who are struggling, but we are seeing the damaging human consequences of our broken welfare state," said Sessions.

"We spend a trillion dollars each year on federal poverty programs. That's more than the budget for Social Security or Defense. But poverty seems only to increase. Something is wrong. Compassion demands that we change."

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