

Channel 6 News Article

Gov. Youngkin details how Virginians will receive food assistance as shutdown threatens SNAP benefits

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RICHMOND, Va. — Gov. Glenn Youngkin gave an update Tuesday afternoon on efforts to provide hunger relief for Virginians as the ongoing federal government shutdown threatens the release of November SNAP benefits.

Youngkin explained that since the state isn't able to fund directly into the SNAP program, his administration has created a parallel food assistance program, Virginia Emergency Nutrition Assistance (VENA), which has never been done before.

If the federal government shutdown has not ended by Nov. 1, VENA will begin on Nov. 3. Those who receive SNAP benefits will receive the state funds directly to their EBT cards.

One important change to note for SNAP beneficiaries is that VENA will be funded on a weekly basis rather than once a month.

"We will be doing it every week for as long as we can," Youngkin said. "Every week means we will be moving funds from the state surplus in order to fund these parallel benefits every week. It totals \$37.5 million roughly every week."

Youngkin explained that similarly to SNAP, VENA beneficiaries will receive funds in the same order.

The first third of beneficiaries will get their benefits on Nov. 3 rather than Nov. 1, the second group will receive their benefits on Nov. 5 rather than Nov. 4 and the third group will receive theirs on Nov. 7, which is their usual distribution date.

The governor noted that families may be impacted by the delay in distribution for the first two groups and said food banks in the state will be receiving additional funding.

"I fully understand not just the disruption, but the hardship, that that delay in two days from Saturday to Monday will cause, and that delay from Tuesday to Wednesday will cause. I reiterate, it is so much more than a disruption, it is a hardship. Therefore, I have directed as part of my emergency declaration that an incremental million dollars be distributed into the food bank network for Virginia by the weekend," Youngkin said. "An incremental million dollars to make sure that if there are families, and I expect there are, families who will find this delay to be challenging, I hope the food banks will have everything on the shelf that they need. What's more important than hope is action, so we'll be distributing an additional million dollars into the food bank system."