

SNAP Drug Felon Ban

TAKE ACTION



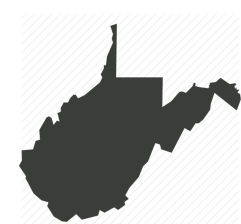
What is the SNAP Drug Felon Ban?

In 1996, Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) which created a federal lifetime ban on benefits from SNAP for individuals convicted of drug-related felonies. State legislatures have the option to modify the terms of this ban or to opt out of the provision altogether.



Does the SNAP Drug Felon Ban Save West Virginia Money?

No. SNAP benefits are federally funded, so allowing an individual with drug convictions to receive them does not burden the state budget, nor does it produce state savings. In fact, the drug felon ban hinders economic growth because decreases the amount of money that will be spent in local grocery stores and other community businesses. In 2016, 2,100 individuals with drug felonies were denied SNAP benefits, adding up to over \$3.1 million in missed federal funds for the state. Every dollar received through SNAP benefits results in about \$1.80 in economic activity. Meaning, West Virginia could have missed out on around \$5.7 million in economic activity by denying SNAP benefits to the 2,100 drug felons in 2016.



Does the SNAP Drug Felon Ban Deter Crime?

There is no evidence to suggest that the drug felon ban deters crime. In fact, the ban increases the chances of recidivism. Multiple studies show that felons re-entering society often face hurdles to employment and experience food insecurity: 60 percent of formerly incarcerated people are unemployed one year after release and 91 percent of people recently released from incarceration experienced food insecurity. The difficulty of finding stable and adequate employment is only made worse by the SNAP ban. When people with drug convictions are denied SNAP benefits, establishing economic stability becomes extremely difficult and it becomes more likely that they could return to criminal activity and drug use.



How Many Other States Have the Drug Felon Ban?

In 1996, all 50 states employed lifetime bans on benefits from SNAP for individuals convicted of drug-related felonies. In recent years, many states have relaxed or ended the ban, acknowledging that easier access to food decreases recidivism and helps stimulate the economy. Currently, only three states--West Virginia, Mississippi, and South Carolina--still have the lifetime ban on SNAP, while 24 states have modified bans, and 23 states and the District of Columbia have no ban at all.

Recommendation: Support elimination of this ban