

A 7 PERCENT SOLUTION? Applying the Bush Standard to Food Stamp Cuts

Budget negotiations in Washington in the coming weeks may set some outlines for the kind of cuts that may be expected from the Agriculture committees in the House and Senate. Senators Chuck Grassley and Tom Harkin of Iowa both serve on the Ag Committee in the Senate.

Cuts in Food Stamps are increasingly likely – some are calling for enormous cuts that would devastate this safety net for nutrition for low-income working families. It may help to review President Bush’s own perception of the burden Food Stamps should bear from Agriculture cuts: 7 percent.

The president had proposed that \$600 million in Food Stamp cuts be part of \$9 billion in Agriculture cuts. This cut would eliminate eligibility for 300,000 people, primarily working families with children. As shown in the figure below, however, if Congress follows the president’s principle that only 7 percent should come from Food Stamps, then for \$3 billion in Ag cuts, Food Stamps would be cut \$200 million.

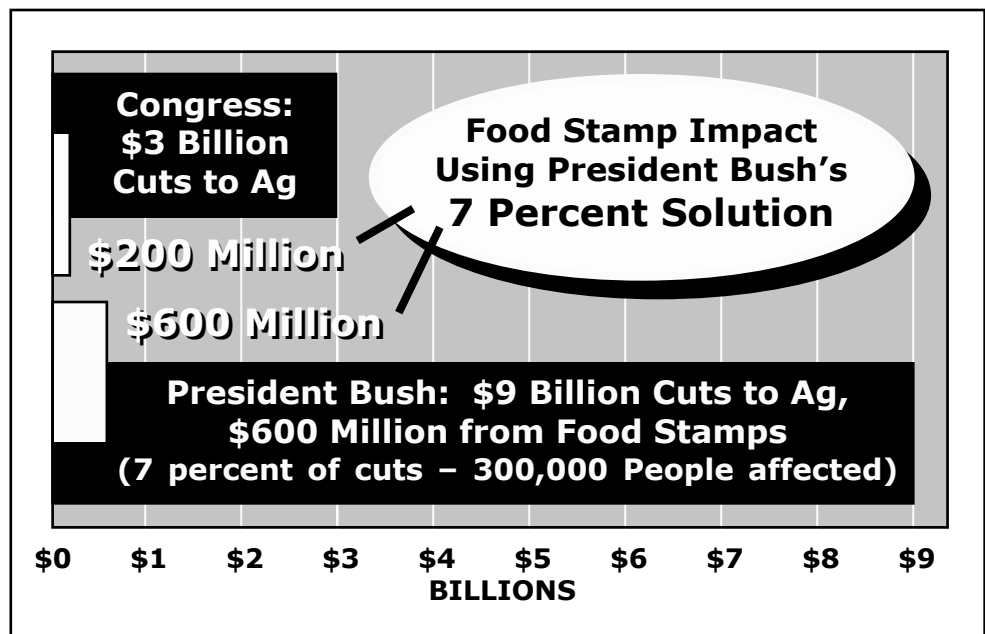
“President Bush has given us what we could call his ‘7 percent solution’ to the Agriculture portion of the budget puzzle,” Iowa Policy Project executive director David Osterberg said. “It’s fair to understand this as his standard for the appropriate burden to place on Food Stamp recipients as a share of the Ag cuts.

“That amounts to \$200 million. Any amount cut from Food Stamps or any low-income service is hard to defend when

taxes are being cut for the wealthy. Any amount higher than \$200 million is disproportionate even to the president’s proposal.”

Food Stamps provide funds that help low-income families purchase food in grocery stores throughout Iowa. As such, the program helps families meet their nutritional needs, while at the same time boosting farm income and local economies.

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