

Legislative Review, Issue #3 – for the Week Ending April 4, 2025

Federal

Tariff News

On Wednesday, April 2, the Trump administration announced the start of reciprocal tariffs on U.S. trading partners. Per *Civil Eats* ([Food Policy Tracker | Civil Eats](#)):

- President Trump announced a 10% baseline tariff on imports from all countries to take effect on April 5, 2025.
- Higher tariffs on some of the United States' agricultural trade partners, including 34% against China and 20% against the European Union, will become effective April 9, 2025, on top of existing tariff rates. A long list of other food and farm trade partners are subject to increased tariffs as well.
- On Monday, April 7, President Trump said the U.S. will apply an additional 50% tariff on imports from China if the Asian nation doesn't withdraw its plan to impose a retaliatory 34% import fee on American products.
 - In response to Mr. Trump's imposition of a 34% tariff on Chinese imports, which is set to go into effect on April 9, Beijing last week announced it would add a 34% tariff on imports of all U.S. products beginning April 10. (April 7, CBS News [Trump threatens to impose an additional 50% tariff on China](#))

In Iowa earlier in the week, USDA Secretary Rollins shared prior to Trump's tariffs announcement that the "USDA is ready to bail out farmers damaged by tariff backlash" as per the *Des Moines Register* (Rollins: USDA ready to 'make farmers whole' if caught in trade war). However, an April 3 article from Reuters ([Trump administration is months away from direct payments to farmers, agriculture secretary says | Reuters](#)) shared details from a Rollins interview with FOX News in which she is quoted as follows: "We are months, literally months away, from understanding if that's going to be necessary," Rollins said. Speaking to reporters at the White House on Thursday, Rollins said Trump remains committed to farmers but farmers and ranchers "understand that there may be a short time of uncertainty."

Budget News (NPR, April 5 [Senate GOP passes budget plan, setting up a critical next phase for Trump agenda : NPR](#) and Politico, April 5 [Senate GOP adopts budget blueprint for Trump agenda — but hurdles loom - POLITICO](#))

- The Republican-led Senate has approved a revised framework for a sweeping budget plan that is critical to President Trump's domestic agenda. The 51-48 vote in the early morning hours on Saturday brings congressional Republicans one step closer to finalizing a sweeping multi-trillion dollar plan to address defense, energy, immigration and tax policy. Republicans in the House and Senate need to pass identical versions of a budget resolution in order to get access to reconciliation, a feature of the budget process that allows them to pass other policies and avoid a filibuster by Senate Democrats.
- What it contains:

- An extension for Trump's 2017 tax cuts and provides for an additional \$1.5T in new tax cuts
- Senate plan would raise the U.S. debt limit by \$5T
- Money for the border and the Pentagon: as much as \$175B that's expected to be used for border enforcement, plus \$150B for defense spending.

Food and Nutrition News

From Civil Eats, March 28 [Food Policy Tracker | Civil Eats](#)

- Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced that the Trump administration will start allowing states to prevent individuals from purchasing soda with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

According to *The New York Times*, Kennedy told states to submit waivers to his department, although he does not have jurisdiction over SNAP. However, the *Times* also reported that Calley Means, a White House advisor, said Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins, who does have SNAP jurisdiction, agreed to grant the waivers that states need to make the change. Rollins had previously indicated she was open to granting the waivers.

From Civil Eats, April 1 [Food Policy Tracker | Civil Eats](#)

- USDA May Allow Iowa to Adopt More Restrictive Summer Meals - On her first visit to Iowa as Secretary of Agriculture, Brooke Rollins signaled she's open to allowing Governor Reynolds to use USDA money to implement her own summer meal distribution system instead of opting in to federal SUN Bucks, which gives low-income families cash benefits for groceries to replace school meals during summer months.

In 2024, Reynolds submitted a waiver request to the USDA to run a program she said would serve more kids at a lower cost. Her office said it did not want to participate in SUN Bucks because the program didn't explicitly promote healthy foods. Instead, she proposed giving out boxes of healthy foods at distribution sites.

Rollins' comments come as other waivers to restrict hunger programs are also on the table. Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. recently indicated the administration will also grant waivers for states to restrict SNAP participants from buying soda and other unhealthy foods. But a recent bill that passed Iowa's House takes those restrictions to a new level, reducing SNAP-eligible foods to a short list of staples while boosting incentives for fresh produce purchases.

Agriculture News

From Civil Eats, March 27 [Exclusive: Senator Cory Booker Introduces Bill to 'Honor Farmer Contracts' | Civil Eats](#)

- Senator Cory Booker Introduces Bill to 'Honor Farmer Contracts' - Called the Honor Farmer Contracts Act of 2025, the bill directs the USDA to immediately "implement all agreements and contracts entered into" and to "rapidly pay past due amounts." It also says the USDA "shall not cancel" any signed contracts with farmers or organizations supporting them unless they've failed to comply with the terms. Technically, the contracts are already legally binding documents, but the agency has not been treating them as such.

Since President Trump's inauguration, payments for already-contracted projects [have been paused](#) across a [broad array of farmer programs](#). The USDA says it has been reviewing those programs and contracts to ensure they align with Trump's directives. The agency has also [canceled individual grant contracts](#) based on their inclusion of diversity and equity language. Pauses and cancellations have caused [serious financial distress to farms](#) and [gutted many nonprofit organizations](#) that provide training, market opportunities, and other support.

In addition to enforcing the terms of contracts, the bill requires the USDA to provide Congress with written notice and justification at least 60 days ahead of closing any Farm Service Agency (FSA) county office, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) field office, or Rural Development Service Center.

State

When the Governor signs a food security-related bill into law, we will note it in this section.

Upcoming Events on the OFSA Team's Schedule

- *Friday, April 11, Community Outreach Fair, McGuire Base Theater, Joint Base MDL, 2 p.m.-6 p.m.*
- *Tuesday, April 22, Navigating the Benefits Landscape virtual session presented by OFSA together with CUMAC, 12 p.m. – 1p.m.*
 - *Details:* Agencies and community-, or faith-based organizations that either offer or make referrals to wraparound services for families and individuals understand the challenges of navigation and enrollment in available benefit programs. This session will focus on organizations' role as a guide local neighbors trust, in preparing a household for meetings with various support program providers. By participating, your team will gain practical ideas for streamlining your workflows while keeping compassion at the center of your mission. Participants will:
 - Understand the process from application through decision
 - Understand the required documentation and how you can assist households with identifying and collecting their documentation accordingly
 - Understanding the application, especially questions about household data
 - Reduce the risk of errors in application completion and submission
 - Lessen the back and forth between an agency and a household to obtain missing or erroneous data

If you would like to attend, please **RSVP by Tuesday, April 15** to OFSA@ag.nj.gov with the following: 1) your name; 2) Your email address; 3) name of your organization, and if 1-2 questions you currently have about helping neighbors apply for benefits.

Resources from OFSA

Public Data Catalog: offers searchable datasets relevant to food security for research, grant writing, and more. Two examples: the *New Jersey Community Asset Map* developed by the NJ Department of Community Affairs and the *Grocery Gap Atlas* by Rural Advancement Foundation International – USA and the Open Spatial Lab at the Data Science Institute at the University of Chicago.

Data Chart Book: provides county-level insights on meal costs, housing burdens, and other key data points

You can find these and additional resources on the [OFSA website here](#).

About the New Jersey Office of Food Security Advocate

The NJ Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA) is providing this content as an informational resource for those who are following proposed changes and other actions with the potential to impact food and nutrition programs and policies directly, or to indirectly impact everyday food security for individuals and families.

OFSA serves all New Jerseyans. OFSA will not recommend or endorse any advocacy actions, nor will OFSA support or oppose any legislation. Similarly, OFSA does not comment on legislation. It is up to each organization, coalition, neighborhood, community and industry/sector and their partners to determine what, if any, actions or positions to take.

OFSA openly acknowledges the sources presented are not an exhaustive list or a full representation of perspectives on the topic. It is vital to consider this compilation not in a vacuum, but together with your existing practices and preferences for following news and legislative updates.

To view previous issues on the OFSA website, [click here](#). Please allow a few days' time for the OFSA website to be updated with a copy of this issue.