



BY KRISTIN SCHUMACHER

Federal Policy Changes Limiting Food Assistance Would Affect Congressional Districts Across the State

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – CalFresh in California – is the cornerstone of federal efforts to help struggling families put food on the table. CalFresh reaches each of California’s 53 congressional districts, though receipt is higher in certain areas (see Map on page 2).¹ In 2015, about 1 in 4 households received CalFresh in the 16th District (D-Costa) and the 21st District (R-Valadao), both of which are in the San Joaquin Valley (26.9% and 24.9%, respectively). In eight other districts, roughly 1 in 6 households received CalFresh. These are in the Sacramento Valley, the San Joaquin Valley, Los Angeles County, the southern border area, and the Inland Empire and Central Sierra.

SNAP lifts families out of poverty and improves health and well-being, especially for children.² Yet President Trump’s proposed budget makes fundamental changes that would weaken SNAP:

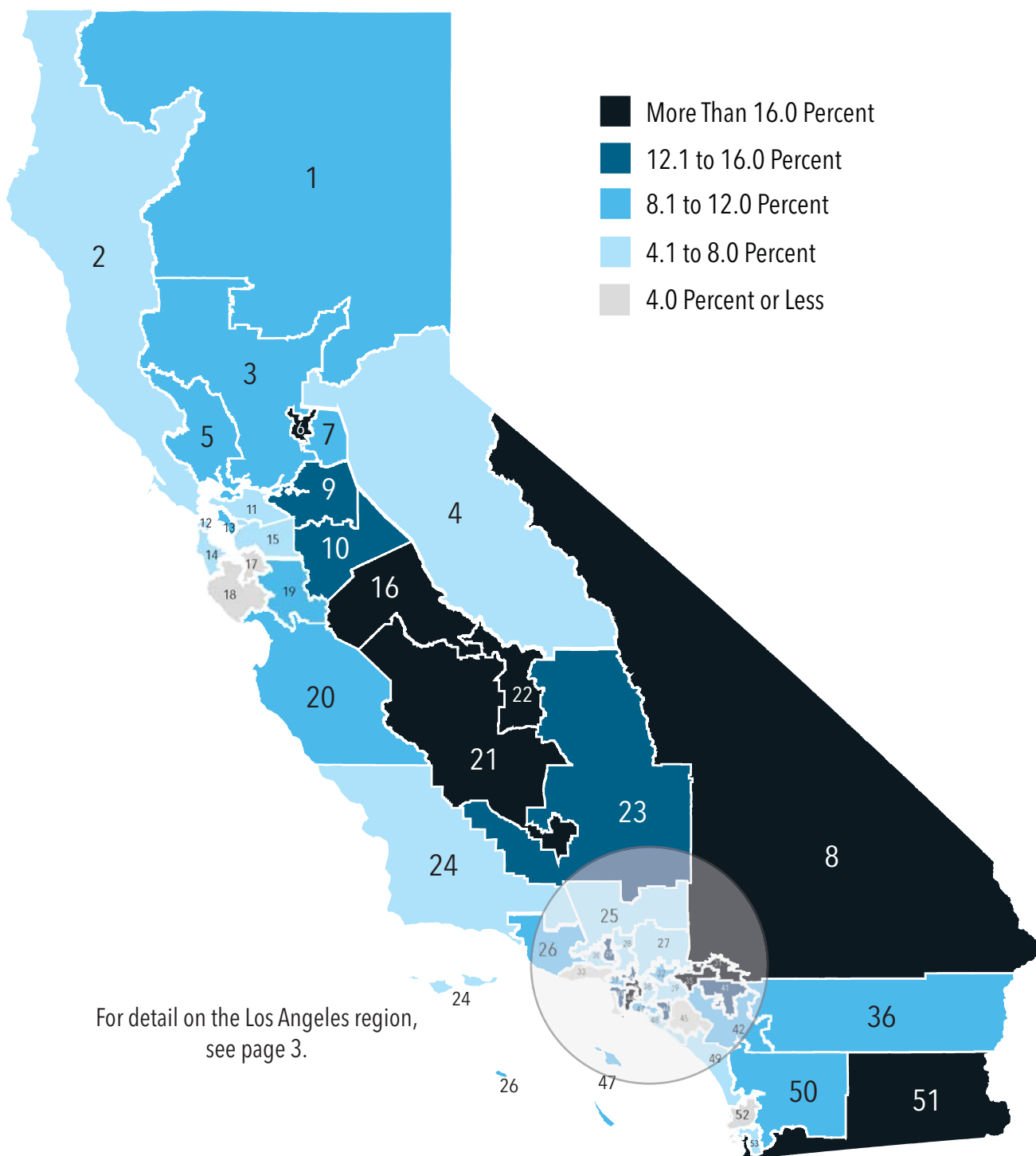
- **Shifting one-quarter of costs to states.** In the 2016 federal fiscal year, which ended on September 30, 2016, California received \$7.2 billion for SNAP.³ Under the President’s proposal, California would need to pay for 25% of these benefits by 2023. If these cuts had been in place in the 2016 fiscal year, California’s share would have been \$1.8 billion.
- **Allowing states to cut costs.** Because many states would be unable or unwilling to cover 25% of SNAP benefits, the President’s proposal would allow states to cut benefits to reduce costs. SNAP benefits are already based on a minimal diet. In California, SNAP benefits are roughly \$1.50 per person per meal.⁴
- **Tightening eligibility and cutting benefits.** The President’s proposal would restrict SNAP eligibility and/or cut benefits for older adults, people with disabilities, large families, working families, and low-income adults not raising minor children. It does this by limiting state flexibility in implementing SNAP and by capping or even eliminating benefits for some groups.⁵

In addition to increasing hunger and hardship, the President’s proposal would limit SNAP’s critical role in mitigating the effects of an economic downturn. When people lose jobs and are less able to afford the basics, SNAP eligibility and enrollment increase. In turn, households spend these benefits on groceries in their communities, generating economic activity. If states must share SNAP costs, they may not be able to boost funding to cover new enrollees during a recession. This would curtail SNAP’s role in stabilizing the economy.

If President Trump and the Republican-led Congress follow through on the proposed changes to SNAP, households in every California congressional district would face increased hardship. Given SNAP’s track record of reducing hunger and improving health, federal policymakers should instead be focused on boosting funding and expanding SNAP’s powerful effects.

The Share of Households That Received CalFresh Is High in Many Congressional Districts

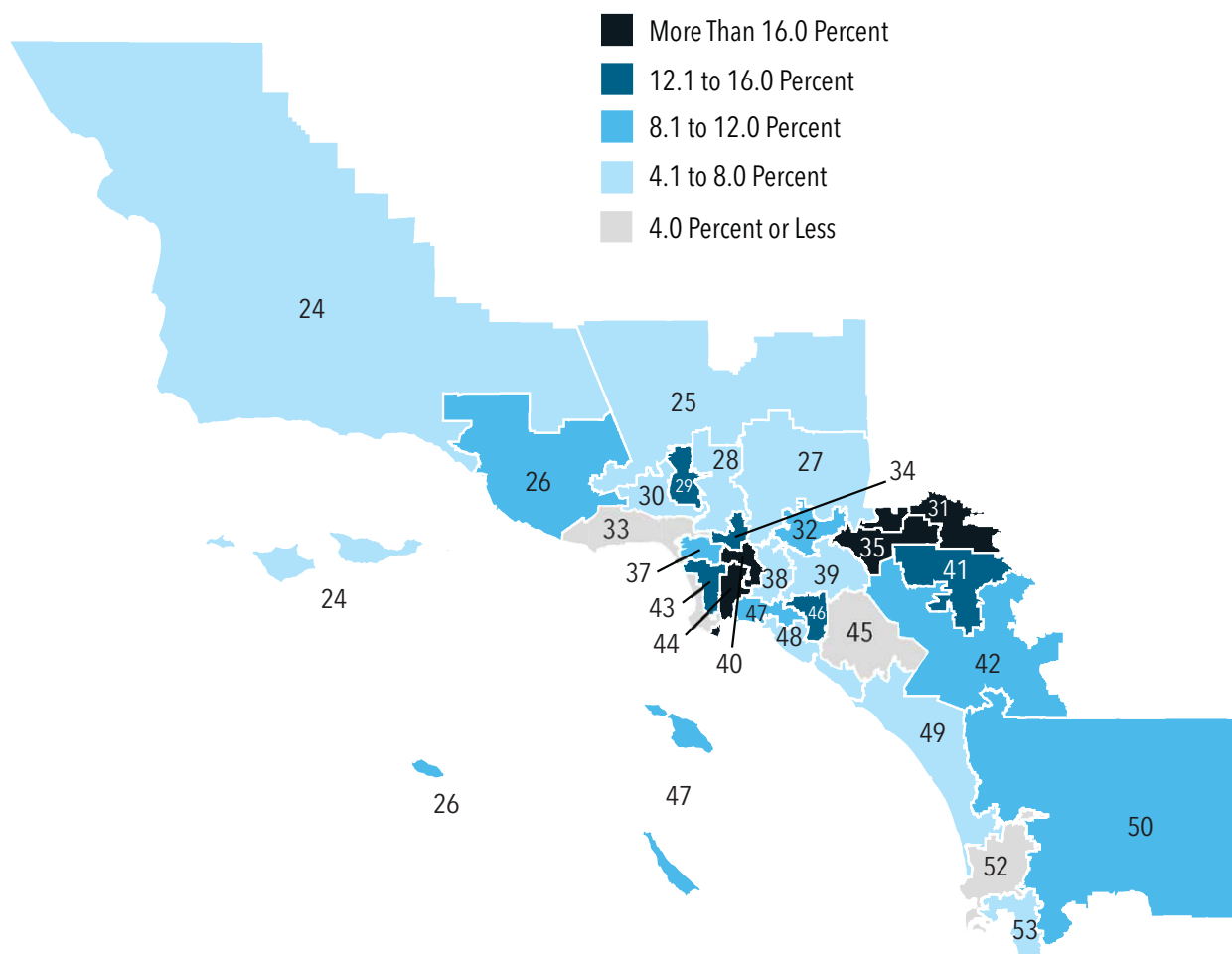
Share of Households That Received CalFresh, 2015



Source: Budget Center analysis of US Census Bureau, American Community Survey data

The Share of Households That Received CalFresh Is High in Many Congressional Districts (Los Angeles Region Detail)

Share of Households That Received CalFresh, 2015



Source: Budget Center analysis of US Census Bureau, American Community Survey data

- ¹ Congressional district data are based on US Census Bureau estimates and do not reflect administrative data. Budget Center analysis of US Census Bureau data provided by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the US Department of Agriculture.
- ² For a review of the research on the benefits of SNAP, see White House Council of Economic Advisors, *Long-Term Benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program* (December 2015).
- ³ United States Department of Agriculture, *SNAP Monthly State Participation and Benefit Summary – Public Data, Fiscal Year 2016*, downloaded from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>.
- ⁴ Data are for the 2016 federal fiscal year.
- ⁵ For more detail on President Trump's proposed changes, see Stacy Dean, *President's Budget Would Shift Substantial Costs to States and Cut Food Assistance for Millions* (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: May 30, 2017).