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## The Food Stamp Fight: Partisan Politics vs. People's Right to Survive

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With millions of Americans out of work and millions more working for minimum wage, it's no secret that there's a hunger crisis in America. I've met seniors in my own community who buy 18-cent cans of dog food to mix with rice. I know people who go into dumpsters to find their dinner.

So why did the Republican-led House of Representatives just pass a bill to eliminate basic food aid for four million struggling Americans, including 200,000 children and 170,000 veterans?

The answer is simple: They're putting partisan ideology above people's right to survive.

When Republican leaders blame the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for causing "dependency" on government, they fail to contemplate a simple question: Why do people receive food stamps in the first place?

While many recipients are seniors, children, and disabled veterans, there are two main reasons that ordinary able-bodied adults need assistance: Unemployment and unlivable wages.

While politicians like to pretend the Great Recession is long gone, it's clearly still present in the black community (13 percent unemployment), the Latino community (9.3 percent unemployment), and among the youngest workers (22 percent unemployment). Nationally, over four million people have been unemployed for six months or longer. Congress -- by cutting jobs for teachers, firefighters, construction workers, and others through misguided policies like the sequester -- is making things worse.

How can people feed themselves when they can't find work?

Sadly, even a full-time job is no guarantee of a full and proper meal on the table. Today, a parent working full-time at a minimum wage job won't earn enough income to cover basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, insurance, and child care. Even working a second job and well over 40-hours a week, it's mathematically impossible for many minimum wage workers to pay for childcare, clothing, and gas. The recent employee draft budget put forward by one of the nation's biggest employers is proof.

If Republican leaders in Congress are committed to eliminating nutrition assistance, there are responsible steps they can take right now: Raise the minimum wage so that workers can pay for their own food. Pass a serious jobs agenda--including the American Jobs Act of 2013--to give people the opportunity to earn a living.

Struggling Americans who receive nutrition assistance are not lazy. It's this Congress that's lazy.

It's time to get serious about a jobs agenda to empower people to feed themselves.