

## Impact on the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children During a Government Shutdown

### What is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)?

**WIC** is a federal nutrition program that provides nutritious foods to nearly 7 million pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to five years old. Nearly 40 percent of all infants in the United States benefit from WIC. It also provides education, counseling, and referrals to health care and social services.

WIC is administered by states, Indian Tribal Organizations, the District of Columbia, and the five territories (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands).

### How does a government shutdown affect WIC?

During a government shutdown, WIC remains open as long as funding is available. **Historically, WIC services have never lapsed due to a government shutdown.** WIC has been able to temporarily maintain services for participants during shutdowns by drawing on specific types of funding. However, a shutdown at the start of a fiscal year presents additional challenges, as states do not have as much funding on hand.

Unless told otherwise, WIC participants should continue to use their benefits and attend scheduled appointments, and eligible people should continue to apply.

### Can WIC stay open during a shutdown?

Yes. States can spend three percent of a prior fiscal year's funding to support services provided in the following year. In addition to that flexibility, states may use their own funding to cover costs, which the federal government has reimbursed following prior shutdowns. States may also use rebates received from manufacturers to pay for food costs for the fiscal year (FY) 2026.

There are also various tools the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has to ensure WIC continues to operate. Education and Workforce Committee Ranking Member Robert C. Scott (VA-03) and Early Childhood and Elementary and Secondary Subcommittee Ranking Member Suzanne Bonamici (OR-01) **pressed** USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to issue guidance to states on maintaining services and to commit to reimbursing states for money spent on keeping WIC open during the shutdown.

### **Does WIC have enough funding during *this* government shutdown?**

On October 6, USDA notified states that expenses during the shutdown *will be eligible* for federal reimbursement and began a recovery process to reallocate unspent funds from FY 2025. To date, USDA has released approximately \$150 million in contingency funds for WIC services and has recovered and reallocated at least \$164 million to states. If available, additional funds could continue to be recovered and reallocated.

On October 7, the Administration publicly [stated](#) on social media that excess tariff revenues (section 32) would be transferred to the WIC program.

On October 9, USDA informed Congressional Committees of its intention to transfer \$300 million to the WIC program to ensure states have enough funding to cover program costs through the end of October. According to USDA, unspent funds in other nutrition accounts were transferred into WIC using interchange authority. States received and spent these funds for October. On October 24, over 40 national organizations, including the National WIC Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Heart Association, and the National Grocers Association, [sent a letter](#) to the Administration urging them to provide an additional \$300 million to cover costs for the first two weeks of November.

After the initial tariff revenue transfer, the Trump Administration acknowledged that additional action was necessary to ensure there is no lapse in WIC services moving forward. Despite waiting until the last minute and not sharing comprehensive information publicly or with Congress, as of November 4, an additional \$450 million was transferred to the WIC program from excess tariff revenues. It is likely additional transfers would be needed later in November if the shutdown persists.

### **What can states do to maintain WIC funding?**

USDA and states should utilize all available means to provide WIC funding during a shutdown. If needed, states can allocate additional general funds to WIC to keep the program operational. Some [states](#) have already taken action, and more have committed to providing the funding necessary to protect WIC services during a shutdown.

States should prioritize maintaining WIC before, during, and after a government shutdown, given how essential the nutritional support provided by the program is for the short- and long-term health and well-being of pregnant and postpartum women, as well as their infants and young children.

### **If the government can keep WIC open, why might it be interrupted?**

WIC services could be interrupted during the government shutdown if President Trump or Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Russ Vought [directs](#) USDA to stop supporting states. Additionally, some states may be unable to bridge the gaps because state budgets are already stretched thin, particularly in light of the Republican and Trump Administration's harmful [cuts](#) to other health and nutrition programs.

### **Where can you find information about WIC in your state?**

WIC state agencies will share information about WIC through their official websites or apps. Since each state's situation may vary, Members are encouraged to contact their agency directly.

### **Is WIC a bipartisan program?**

WIC has generally enjoyed bipartisan support. However, Republicans' support for the program was notably absent over the past year. For example, the House's FY 2026 Agriculture appropriations bill [does not fully fund](#) the WIC program nor ensure that all eligible participants will receive services.

Moreover, the ['Big Ugly Law'](#), passed by Congressional Republicans and signed by President Trump, made drastic cuts to both SNAP and Medicaid, making it more difficult for eligible participants to seamlessly enroll in WIC. Over [3 million](#) women and children could lose their automatic eligibility for WIC due to the Medicaid cuts alone.

### **How do we prevent lapses in WIC services during future government shutdowns?**

On October 10, Ranking Member Scott and Ranking Member Bonamici introduced the [WIC Benefits Protection Act](#) to make funding for the WIC program mandatory and ensure consistent funding. Currently, WIC is a discretionary program that is funded through the annual appropriations process, while other child nutrition programs are not subject to annual appropriations. By making funding for the program mandatory, the bill would provide stability for states and peace of mind for families who rely on WIC for critical supports and services.