



House Committee on Human Services

October 30, 2025



Impact of Federal/State Changes to SNAP; Food Insecurity



*“Impact on Special Immigration Visa
individuals”*



1. Who is a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holder?
2. Why did Vermont end SNAP on October 1?
3. What has the human impact been?



Afghan Community in Vermont



- More than **650 Afghan** allies resettled in Vermont today (refugees, asylees and SIV holders)
- Largest per-capita population of Afghan allies in the U.S.
- Between 2019 and 2023, Afghan arrivals contributed more than **\$1.97 billion** in local, state and federal taxes (far more than received in benefits).
- Both individuals and families
- Multiple organizations engaged in resettlement efforts



Vermont Afghan Alliance





Afghan allies continue to arrive Vermont



15 arrivals since March 2025 to northern Vermont

25 arrivals expected between November 1 and August 31, 2026



An estimated 2/3rds of arrivals since 2021 are SIV holders, and 1/3 are men on their own still awaiting arrival of a wife and children.



Changes to U.S. refugee policy & policy on Afghanistan





H.R. 1 - One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA)

- Amends **ONLY** the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, no other legislation.

SEC. 10108. ALIEN SNAP ELIGIBILITY.

Section 6(f) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(f)) is amended to read as follows:

“(f) No individual who is a member of a household otherwise eligible to participate in the supplemental nutrition assistance program under this section shall be eligible to participate in the supplemental nutrition assistance program as a member of that or any other household unless he or she is—

“(1) a resident of the United States; and

“(2) either—

“(A) a citizen or national of the United States;

“(B) an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence as an immigrant as defined by sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(20) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, excluding, among others, alien visitors, tourists, diplomats, and students who enter the United States temporarily with no intention of abandoning their residence in a foreign country;

“(C) an alien who has been granted the status of Cuban and Haitian entrant, as defined in section 501(c) of the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980 (Public Law 96–422); or

“(D) an individual who lawfully resides in the United States in accordance with a Compact of Free Association referred to in section 402(b)(2)(G) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

The income (less, at State option, a pro rata share) and financial resources of the individual rendered ineligible to participate in the supplemental nutrition assistance program under this subsection shall be considered in determining the eligibility and the value of the allotment of the household of which such individual is a member.”



Who is a refugee or asylee and when do they become a legal permanent resident?

- **Refugee**
 - Someone outside their country of nationality, with a well-founded fear of persecution
 - Becomes eligible to become a **legal permanent resident after being physically present in the U.S. for 1-year.**
 - **Asylee**
 - Someone outside their country of origin, with a well-founded fear of persecution
 - Becomes eligible to become a **legal permanent resident, 1-year after a grant of asylum.**
-



Who is a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holder?

- Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009
- An Afghan (or Iraqi) national employed by/or on behalf of the U.S. Government in Afghanistan (or Iraq).
- Eligible for “resettlement assistance, entitlement programs, and other benefits **eligible to refugees.**”
- An SIV holder **becomes a legal permanent resident upon entering a point of entry in the U.S.** The “green card” is mailed to the home.



H.R. 1 - One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA)

- Refugees and asylees who have not “adjusted” to legal permanent residence status lose SNAP.
- Refugees, asylee and SIV holders who have legal permanent residence status **SHOULD NOT** lose SNAP.

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“The state of Vermont has exempted some green card holders (former asylees and refugees) from the cancellation of SNAP while they await further guidance but did not feel they had the legal backing to exempt the SIV holders...”

- September 23, 2025 notice to organizations from the Vermont State Refugee Office



Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 (PRWORA)

- Established a 5-year waiting period for **legal permanent residents** to receive certain benefits including SNAP, but exempted certain “qualified aliens” including:
 - Refugees (*and SIV holders per 2009 act of Congress)
 - Asylees
 - And other humanitarian entrants



2011 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) guidance

- Clarified that Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrants **do not** have to meet the 5-year residency requirement under PRWORA.
- Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 made Afghan SIV holders eligible for the same “resettlement assistance, entitlement programs, and other benefits **available to refugees.**”



Takeaways:

- Vermont incorrectly ended SNAP for Afghan SIV holders on October 1 in contradiction of HR1, PRWORA and the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009.
- **3 different national immigration sources**, released legal memos outlining how Vermont's determination is incorrect (FRAC, RCUSA and PIF)
- Vermont was "first in the nation" to remove Afghan SIV holders from SNAP, with other states taking a different approach: MA, NJ, CT, IA, NY, UT, MD, LA, CO, AZ, WV
- The Trump Administration specifically exempted Afghan SIV holders from travel bans, continues to process SIV applications, and re-started it's contract with IOM in Pakistan.



Recommendations:

- Urgently reinstate **SNAP** benefits for SIV holders, and provide back-benefits to October 1.
- If concern is for Vermont's "error rate", fund SNAP for these Vermonsters through state funds.
- As a matter of policy, **additionally reinstate SNAP** for refugees and asylees awaiting adjustment to legal permanent resident status (using state funds).



Recommendations cont.

“It’s our obligation at this point as states to do what we can for the people we serve,” Gov. Phil Scott said after the meeting.
“This is a basic benefit that many, many Vermonters rely on.”

By Theo Wells-Spackman

October 29, 2025, 3:49 pm

Publicly clarify State’s position as well as unequivocal support for the contributions of SIV holders, refugees and asylees, as Vermonters, to Vermont’s workforce, tax base, economy and communities.



Thank you

