

# Obama: Now His Killing Program Takes Food Away

by Paul Gallagher and Nancy Spannaus

Nov. 5—Barack Obama, we learn from the recent book on his 2012 Presidential campaign, *Doubling Down*, released Nov. 1, told a group of his aides in early 2012, “I’m very good at killing people.” The subject was drones, but the admission can’t have been news to anyone there.

For years now, the would-be Nero has conducted Tuesday “killing sessions” at the White House, where he determines whom his drone program will strike next. All the while, his Nazi health program, known as Obamacare, was setting up the conditions for the mass kill of “useless eaters,” through cutting back medical services and red-lining those considered to have “lives unworthy to be lived” (see following article). Now comes the direct attack on food for the poor, with the major cut in food stamps (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, or SNAP) which took effect on Nov. 1.

## Obama Wanted the Cut

Already a year earlier, Obama had strongly advised Congressional Democrats to pay for continued teacher-employment aid to states, by cutting the Stimulus Act funds which had increased food stamp payments since 2009. Despite the fact that use of food stamps continued desperately growing along with poverty—33 million people needing them in 2009, 37 million in 2010, 42 million in 2011, 46 million in 2012, 48 million in 2013—Obama had also told Democrats to cut the food

stamp funds to help pay for expanding Medicaid, part of his Obamacare disaster.

Those funds therefore ran out on Hallowe’en this year, leading to a \$5 billion cut in benefits, spread across the nation. Depending on how House-Senate farm bill negotiations go, food stamp aid may drop by as much as \$11 billion this year, out of an \$80 billion annual program. The Stimulus funds, as the *Los Angeles Times* editorialized, were supposed to be a *five-year cost of living (COLA) increase* which would allow food stamps to keep up with inflation; they did not even anticipate continually growing poverty and economic depression. These funds are now removed, even though 5 million more Americans are officially in poverty than when the stimulus program started, and food prices are roughly 12-13% higher, even for the cheapest foods.

The result can be starvation. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) itself on Nov. 3, through Kevin Concannon (Undersecretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services), said that the Nov. 1 cuts in food stamps “are certain to result in missed meals for those enrolled.” And, “for 7 million Americans, food stamps are their only source of income.... It is a huge challenge to those households.”[!]

The national median income of a *household* using food stamps is \$11,000. In one depressed state, Alabama, more than 900,000—almost one in five Alabamians—are impacted by the cut, according to the

*Andalusia Star News* of Covington County. The cut is from \$1.50 to \$1.39 per person, per meal.

It is generally agreed that in the fourth week of November (Thanksgiving week), food banks around the country will be inundated with people lacking food. But Concannon said local food banks are not prepared to serve as backstops for this tragedy. Why then did Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, interviewed for a full hour on C-SPAN Nov. 3 on this subject, never once suggest the cuts should be restored, even as he described their malnutritional impact?

Vilsack was asked: “In 2009, unemployment was 8.4% and rising, and 33 million Americans were on food stamps; in 2013, it is 7.2% and falling, and 48 million are on food stamps; why is this?” Vilsack made clear that standards have not been loosened, and in fact, said the White House has made a national clamp-down on “food stamp fraud” by individuals and businesses. Otherwise, he offered no reason, and claimed that “7 million private sector jobs have been created in a year—or, I guess it’s two years....”

The reason few Democrats in D.C. are calling for *restoring* the deadly cut, is that it’s Obama’s cut. As he bragged, “I’m very good at killing people.”

## Genocide

The Nov. 1 cut is equivalent to about 16 meals a month for a family of three, according to a Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) analysis, using the USDA’s “Thrifty Food Plan.” Already, food pantry operators report that most people run out of the stamps after the third week of the month—leaving them scrambling for sustenance, including at food pantries.

And who are the recipients? According to the USDA (based on a study of data gathered in Fiscal Year 2010), statistics for the food stamp program are as follows:

- 49% of all participant households have children (age 17 or younger), and 55% of those are single-parent households;
- 15% of all participant households have elderly (age 60 or over) members;
- 20% of all participant households have non-elderly disabled members.
- The average gross monthly income per food stamp household is \$731; the average net income is \$336;
- 37% of participants are white, 22% are African-American, 10% are Hispanic, 2% are Asian, 4% are Native American, and 19% are of unknown race or ethnicity.

While many recipients are working, those jobs are often at such extremely low wages that the households cannot make ends meet without aid. Thanks to a government policy which pours money into finance, at the expense of a program of public infrastructure investment—and has done so for decades—the number of people living in poverty is the highest ever in U.S. history. Indeed, 1 in 15 Americans lives in “deep poverty,” which is measured as an annual income of \$11,000 a year.

The current cuts are going to deprive these people of basic food—to the brink of starvation. Parents will forego food to feed their children. The elderly and disabled will have to choose between food and medication. And billions more in cuts to SNAP are on the table (\$4 billion by the Senate, \$40 billion by the House), in current budget negotiations.

## No Safety Net

MSNBC notes that food pantries are already strained, with increasing numbers dependent on them. “Each week, there’s new people,” says the manager of a New York City food pantry. “The numbers have just skyrocketed.” Statements have been issued by food pantry spokesmen around the country, citing increases of those coming in to get food in the recent period (before the cut) that range as high as 80%.

“People are living at the margins,” said Ellen Volinger, legal director and SNAP advocate at the Food Research and Action Center, as quoted by Reuters. “It’s not an abstract metric for people. It’s actual dollars to keep food in the refrigerator.”

Hundreds of thousands of veterans from every state are also among those whose benefits were cut on Nov. 1, according to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. In any given month in 2011, a total of 900,000 veterans nationwide lived in households that relied on SNAP to provide food for their families, CBPP’s analysis of Census data shows. Even thousands of members of the active duty military are being affected.

Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.), a member of the House Agriculture Committee, who is trying to limit further cuts, recalls that Obama promised during his first Presidential campaign to end child hunger by 2015. But, McGovern told MSNBC, “we haven’t done a goddamn thing to do that, to be honest.”

That’s true. And unless Obama is removed and Glass-Steagall is put into effect, to cut Wall Street out of controlling U.S. government policy, the killing process is going to continue to get worse, a lot worse.