

Food stamp changes: some win, some lose

WASHINGTON (AP) — About 400,670 households will be scratched from the food-stamp rolls during the first four months of next year as new regulations take effect, the Agriculture Department said Tuesday.

But slightly higher benefits are in store for most of the 4.38 million families remaining and for the more than thousands of elderly poor couples and other families expected to be attracted to the streamlined program.

Agriculture Secretary Bob Bergland revealed the new rules,

which were ordered by Congress in a massive rewriting of the Food Stamp Act. Most of the changes take effect Jan. 1.

The major change in the new rules is an end to the requirement that poor families buy their food stamps. There are also tighter eligibility standards and a requirement that many adult recipients look for work.

The law also requires increases in the benefits twice a year to keep up with rising grocery prices. Preliminary calculations indicate a 5 percent hike is coming on Jan. 1.

Bergland told a news conference that the theme of the new law and the regulations "is to eliminate those who should not be receiving food stamps, while assuring that we do get food stamps to those who are truly in need."

Under the present rules, a four-person family with monthly income of \$250 after a series of deductions must come up with \$71 in cash to get an allotment of \$182 in coupons that can be redeemed for groceries.

Under the new rules, the same family would get \$111 in coupons but would not have to pay anything, assuming its adjusted income were the same.

That adjusted income may

change, though. The new rules give states and counties four months to go through their files and determine whether a household can continue receiving food stamp benefits, which now average \$28.37 per person each month, and to recalculate the amount.

When that process is complete, an estimated 980,155 households will find their monthly benefits cut by at least \$5, but 1.16 million families should have more to spend on food, officials said.

Most of those cut from the food stamp rolls under the new regulations will have incomes that are too high, Bergland said. Others will be barred because they have assets of more than \$1,750 or an

automobile worth more than 4,500, both disqualifying factors.

The new law says no one can get food stamps if the family income after deductions is higher than the federal poverty line for that sized household — or, for example, \$541 a month for a family of four. In some instances, the deduction system could mean a family could have as much as \$852 a month in gross income and still qualify.

Those still certified by next May could lose their stamps if they don't meet new rules on searching for work. Unless there are children under 12, both parents in a family must seek jobs and, in some states, will be forced to take jobs with local governments.

making the news

From Associated Press reports

SALISBURY, Rhodesia — The interim government struck down its segregation laws Tuesday, clearing the way for blacks to live in white neighborhoods, attend white schools and use white hospitals — if they can afford it.

The changes were lauded by the bi-racial government as a significant breakthrough, despite the fact that only the wealthiest of the nation's 6.7 million blacks will be able to afford the integration. The average earnings of blacks is about \$830 a year compared to \$9,240 for Rhodesia's 260,000 whites.

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court said Tuesday it will decide whether women are unfairly victimized by government job practices that give a preference to military veterans.

The court agreed to review a ruling by a three-judge federal court in Boston that outlawed such preferential treatment in Massachusetts as unconstitutional sex bias.

The justices' eventual ruling will carry nationwide impact. The federal government and 46 states — all but Arkansas, Mississippi, New Mexico and South Carolina — include a veterans' preference in their hiring procedures.

WASHINGTON — The threat of a nationwide mail strike faded Tuesday as a letter carriers union approved a new contract by a 6-1 margin and a second union was reported voting heavily in favor of the pact.

Members of the National Association of Letter Carriers also voted by a wide margin to oust their president, J. Joseph Vacca, after one term, union officials confirmed.

Chris Gilbert, a letter carriers official, said the union approved a new three-year contract with the U.S. Postal Service by about 97,000 to 15,000.

FLORENCE Ore. — Debbie Wilson can have her baby now — with the official blessing of the Florence City Council.

Council members have passed a tongue-in-cheek motion to approve a variance to the city's "sex ordinance" for Wilson and her husband, Dave.

The council had inadvertently banned sex more than a year ago when it passed a law prohibiting sexual intercourse "in view of any public or private place."

Wilson wrote the city Sept. 19 suggesting he might require a variance to the law because his wife is expecting a baby.

Council member Carol Lynda Erskine noted at this week's council meeting that no action had been taken on the Wilson request, and Debbie Wilson has waited long past the date the baby was due.

"Mrs. Wilson has waited 2½ weeks and she is becoming very uncomfortable," Erskine said.

So the council granted the variance, despite good-natured grumbling from the police chief that warrants for arrest would be more appropriate.

Sniper attacks University med center — officials tighten early morning security

PORTLAND (AP) — The University of Oregon Health Sciences Center plans to double its security patrols following the second sniper shooting in two days, officials said Monday.

More than 20 shots were fired in the early morning hours Sunday and Monday but no injuries were reported, center officials said.

Most of the buildings were empty at the time of the shootings but at least one bullet shattered a window in a hospital room where two patients were staying.

Dr. Leonard Laster, president of the center, said Portland police would be investigating the incidents and also would provide additional patrols in the area.

Officials at the center, which is an umbrella for several schools and hospitals, were baffled as to possible motives for the pre-dawn

attacks.

"I can't fathom why people would take these acts against this institution," Laster said.

Richard Anderson, acting director of security for the center, said he had no reports of any verbal threats against the medical complex.

Anderson said he would discuss with Laster the possibility of arming the security guards. They are not commissioned police officers.

Security guard Bryon Brown was shot at Sunday morning as he pursued a car carrying three young men, suspects in the first shooting incident.

Brown said he had to spin his vehicle to avoid the bullet as he

pursued the vehicle at speeds up to 65 miles per hour on the Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway.

Police reported finding at least five bullets which struck the School of Dentistry Monday. The rifle shots shattered two floor-to-ceiling windows and caused other minor damages totaling about \$2,500, officials said.

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