

WAIVER REQUEST

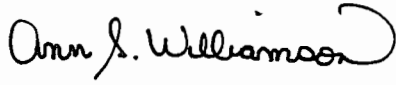
1. **Waiver serial number (if request is extension):** 970075
2. **Type of request:** Extension
3. **Primary regulation citation:** 7 CFR 273.24
4. **Secondary regulation citation, if any:**
5. **State:** Louisiana
6. **Region:** Southwest
7. **Regulatory Requirements:** 7 CFR 273.24 provides that no individual shall be eligible to participate in the Food Stamp Program as a member of any household if, during a 36-month period, the individual received food stamp benefits for not less than 3 months (consecutive or otherwise), during which the individual did not work 20 hours or more per week, averaged monthly; did not participate in and comply with the requirements of a work program for 20 hours or more per week; did not participate in and comply with requirements of a program under Section 20 or a comparable program established by the state; or received benefits as they were exempt from these regulations.

Section 6(o) of the Food Stamp Act, as amended by Section 824 of the PRWORA, also provides that, upon request of a State agency, the Secretary may waive the applicability of the above provision for any group of individuals in the State if the Secretary makes a determination that the area in which the individuals reside has an unemployment rate of more than 10 percent, or does not have a sufficient number of jobs to provide employment for the individuals.

8. **Proposed alternative procedures:** We propose to continue to exempt from this requirement, groups of individuals who reside in areas with insufficient jobs as determined by the U. S. Department of Labor (DOL) statistics and published by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. A copy of the report is attached.

The first group for which we are requesting a waiver is areas in which the average unemployment rate for the calendar years of 1999 and 2000 was more than 20% above the national average. The threshold for these two calendar years was 4.9%. Louisiana has 53 areas which had unemployment rates in excess of the threshold for this period. Approval of this waiver would exempt residents of the following areas from the work requirement provisions of 7 CFR 273.24: Acadia, Allen, Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, Beauregard, Bienville, Caddo, Calcasieu, Caldwell, Cameron, Catahoula, Claiborne, Concordia, DeSoto, East Carroll, East Feliciana, Evangeline, Franklin, Grant, Iberia, Iberville, Jackson, Jefferson Davis, LaSalle, Livingston, Madison, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Orleans, Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, Red River, Richland, Sabine, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. John The Baptist, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Tangipahoa, Tensas, Vermilion, Vernon, Washington, Webster, West Carroll, Winn and the city of Monroe.

Additionally, we propose to continue to waive areas in which the average unemployment rate for the most current period of October 2000 through September 2001 was more than 20% above the national average for the same period. The threshold for this period is 5.0%. Louisiana has four areas which exceed the threshold for the most current period. Approval of this waiver would exempt residents of the following areas from the work requirements provisions of 7 CFR 273.24: Union, West Baton Rouge, West Feliciana and the city of Baton Rouge.

9. **Justification for request:** This waiver is requested under the provisions of 7 CFR 273.24 which gives the Secretary authority to grant a waiver of 7 U.S.C. 2015(o)(4). Approval of the waiver request would allow individuals in areas determined to have insufficient jobs to participate in the Food Stamp Program without being required to meet unrealistic program work requirements.
10. **Anticipated impact on households and State agency operations:** The households affected are those residing in areas determined to have insufficient jobs in the calendar years of 1999 and 2000 or in the most current period beginning October 2000 through September 2001. U. S. DOL statistics indicate that 57 areas in Louisiana would be exempt from these requirements under this waiver. This waiver would ease the burden of individuals to comply with work requirements which are unreasonable given the local economic environment and aid in making food benefits available to some of the most vulnerable households. Additionally, this waiver provides for more efficient operation of the Food Stamp Program by allowing the State Agency to concentrate efforts and resources in regard to work requirements on those households most likely to succeed.
11. **Caseload information and quality control error rate for affected households:** In February 2002, the latest month for which data is available, 210,834 households received food stamps.
There are no applicable quality control error rates to report for this waiver request.
12. **Anticipated implementation date and time period for which waiver is needed:** We are requesting the waiver be extended thru December 31, 2002. As proposed in number 8 above, a yearly evaluation will be conducted based on the most current annual statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration.
13. **Proposed quality control review procedures:** N/A
14. **Signature:**

Ann S. Williamson
Assistant Secretary
15. **Date:** April 2, 2002