

**MERLEFEST** | APRIL 23-26, 2026

# LINEUP ANNOUNCED



ALLISON LEE ISLEY, WINSTON-SALEM JOURNAL

A festivalgoer dances during a previous MerleFest event. MerleFest 2026 will feature Alison Krauss, Blackberry Smoke and Old Crow Medicine Show.

## Alison Krauss, Blackberry Smoke will headline annual music festival

**LISA O'DONNELL**  
Winston-Salem Journal

Alison Krauss & Union Station and Blackberry Smoke are among the headliners of next year's MerleFest. The roots music festival, which annually draws about 75,000 to the campus of Wilkes Community College, announced its lineup on Tuesday. MerleFest 2026 will be held April 23-26.

Krauss is a 14-time Grammy winner. Dobro virtuoso Jerry Douglas will be featured with Krauss' backing band, Union Station. Other big names include Southern rockers Blackberry Smoke, Charles Wesley Godwin, Molly Tuttle and Old Crow Medicine Show. Festival favorites, including Sam Bush, Peter Rowan, Steep Canyon

Rangers, The Waybacks and Presley Barker, are also in the lineup. Additional artists will be announced in the coming months. Tickets are now on sale. Visit [merlefest.org/purchase](http://merlefest.org/purchase).  
[lodonnell@wsjournal.com](mailto:lodonnell@wsjournal.com)  
336-727-7420  
[@lisaodonnellWSJ](https://twitter.com/lisaodonnellWSJ)

# States scramble to send full SNAP food benefits

**GEOFF MULVIHILL AND  
DAVID A. LIEB**  
Associated Press

With the longest U.S. government shutdown over, state officials said Thursday they were working quickly to get full SNAP food benefits to millions of people who made do with little to no assistance for the past couple of weeks. A back-and-forth series of court rulings and shifting policies from President Donald Trump's administration led to a patchwork distribution of November benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. While some states already issued full SNAP benefits, about two-thirds of states issued only partial benefits or none at all before the government shutdown ended late Wednesday. The U.S. Department of Agriculture,

which runs the program, issued new guidance Thursday, instructing: "State agencies must take immediate steps to ensure households receive their full November allotments promptly." The federal food program serves about 42 million people, about 1 in 8 Americans, in lower-income households. They receive an average of about \$190 monthly per person. Because of the uncertainty over benefits, the USDA told states to exclude November from a federal requirement that most adult SNAP recipients work, volunteer or participate in job training for at least 80 hours a month. Under normal circumstances, recipients can only go three months in a span of three years without meeting the work requirements.



STEPHANIE SCARBROUGH, ASSOCIATED PRESS

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A person shops for produce Monday at a grocery store in Baltimore.