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The Jackson Sun

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Tennessee districts warn of deep cuts

Trump SNAP changes could mean schools see tens of millions of dollars less in food programs

Vivian Jones
Nashville Tennessean
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

If lawmakers don't update how the state determines children to be low-income, Tennessee school districts could see tens of millions less K-12 funding because of new restrictions on federal food programs in President Donald Trump's Big Beautiful Bill.

New, stricter eligibility requirements for SNAP and TANF implemented in the Trump Administration's landmark budget bill have caused hundreds of Tennessee children to no longer automatically qualify for state "economic disadvantage" funding for K-12 schools. Cocke County in upper East Tennessee lost the supplemental funding for

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Students arrive on the first day of school at LaGuardo Elementary School on Aug. 1, 2025, in Lebanon.
MARK ZALESKI/
THE TENNESSEAN

Lebanon-Israel peace talks begin



Secretary of State Marco Rubio, flanked by U.S. State Department Counselor Michael Needham, left, and U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Michel Issa, meets with the Israeli and Lebanese ambassadors to the United States in Washington on April 14. KEVIN LAMARQUE/REUTERS

U.S. blockade continues, includes 10K troops

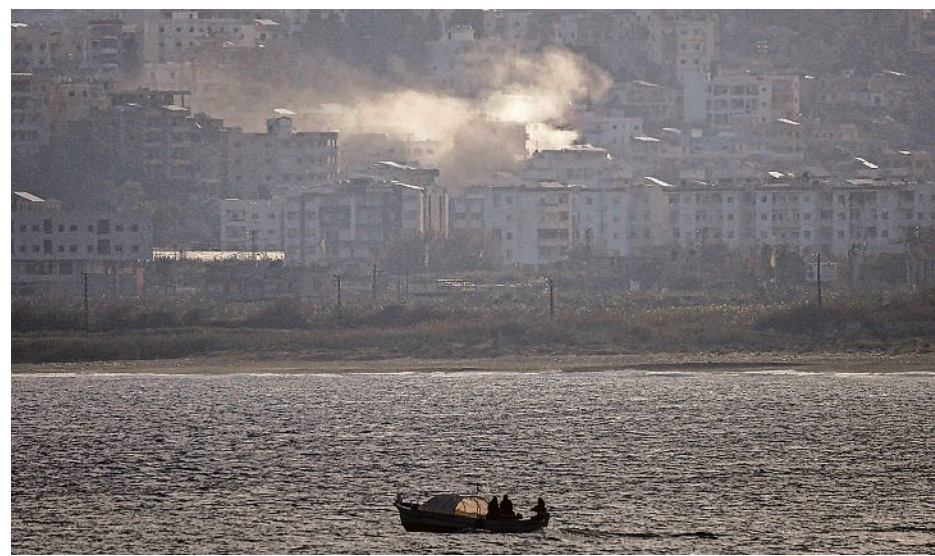
Christopher Cann, Michael Loria and Francesca Chambers
USA TODAY

Secretary of State Marco Rubio was optimistic and urged patience as peace talks between Israeli and Lebanese diplomats began in Washington on April 14. "Our hope here, and I know this will be a process, all of the complexities of this matter are not going to be resolved in the next six hours, but we can begin to move forward to create the framework," Rubio told reporters before the parties began discussing possible ways to end the conflict.

The United States and Israel say Lebanon was not included in the two-week ceasefire agreed to with Iran, and Israel has carried out strikes in Lebanon against Iranian proxy group Hezbollah since the ceasefire began.

Hezbollah launched strikes on Israel in solidarity with Iran after the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in strikes at the start of the war.

Israel has responded with a punish-



Fishermen sail their boat as smoke from an Israeli air strike rises in the Abbasiye area in Tyre, Lebanon, on April 14. LOUISA GOULIAMAKI/REUTERS

ing bombing campaign that has devastated parts of Beirut and with an invasion of parts of Lebanon bordering Israel. More than 2,000 people in Lebanon have been killed, according to the country's health ministry. Iranian leaders have made it clear any end to the war must include Lebanon.

The meeting in Washington came af-

ter Trump urged Israel to scale back its offensive in Lebanon, which threatened the ongoing ceasefire. Hezbollah called on the Lebanese government to cancel the meeting and vowed to continue confronting Israeli attacks. Ahead of the meeting, air strikes were

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Blast that killed 16 leads to record fine

Kelly Puente
Nashville Tennessean
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

The \$3.1 million fine issued to an explosives manufacturing plant near the town of Bucksport after October's deadly blast ranks among the largest workplace safety penalties ever imposed by state regulators.

But safety experts say the total could have been significantly higher if the Tennessee Occupational Safety and Health Administration followed federal penalty scales.

Tennessee is one of 22 states and jurisdictions that operate their own OSHA-approved workplace safety programs, rather than relying on federal enforcement. It's also one of the last states still using outdated penalty caps, leaving companies facing significantly lower fines, even as the state ranks among the worst for worker deaths.

The issue comes as TOSHA on April 7 hit Accurate Energetic Systems with a record \$3.1 million in penalties for a blast that killed 16 workers on its 1,300-acre campus west of Nashville, where the company manufactures explosives for the U.S. government. It ranked among the deadliest industrial disasters in U.S. history.

The penalties stem from 100 safety violations, including 59 classified as "willful." Willful violations are among the most serious and require evidence that a company knew about a hazard and failed to correct it.

Lower penalties for major violations

In Tennessee, willful penalties are capped at \$70,000 per violation, which is less than half the federal cap of \$165,514.

Tennessee is one of a handful of states, including Indiana and Kentucky, that haven't adopted the higher federal penalty cap enacted in 2016.

And experts say that gap can have real consequences.

Debbie Berkowitz, who served as OSHA chief of staff in the Obama administration and led occupational safety research at the National Employment Law Project, said big penalties are a strong deterrent.

"Maybe if the penalties had been

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