

NASFAA's "Off the Cuff" Podcast – Episode 265 Transcript

OTC Inside the Beltway: Wrapping Up the Debt Ceiling and the Latest on Student Loan Debt Cancellation

Justin Draeger:

Hey, everybody. Welcome to another edition of "Off the Cuff". I'm Justin Draeger.

Karen McCarthy:

I'm Karen McCarthy from NASFAA's policy team.

Rachel Gentry:

And I'm Rachel Rotunda, also with NASFAA's policy team.

Justin Draeger:

Welcome back, everybody. Rachel, good to see you on the podcast again. Glad to have you here.

Rachel Gentry:

Yeah, thanks for having me.

Justin Draeger:

And Rachel, you're just getting back from vacation too, international and abroad, our international traveler. Where were you? You were just at?

Rachel Gentry:

Yes, was in London for a week.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah and how?

Rachel Gentry:

A week of beautiful weather. Got to visit all the coronation spots, itched that scratch. No, that's not what I'm trying to say. Scratched that itch.

Justin Draeger:

We got you. I read you, you're just a few months late from all the happenings, but you visited all the hotspots is the idea.

Rachel Gentry:

Yes, first time in London and I don't know if I would say I'm a fan of the royal family, but I'm intrigued by it, so it was fun to see some of the highlights.

Justin Draeger:

This is your first day back actually, and this is a very ... I'm glad you got the vacation out of the way, because this is going to be a very, very busy month in D.C. And then we go right into our national conference. In fact, SCOTUS, the Supreme Court right now is releasing opinions. Hugh, remind me, they're releasing opinions - you're producing this week, so I'm just bring you in even though you didn't introduce yourself. But you're watching for us. They're releasing opinions. They usually just do it on a schedule, but they're doing it more frequently this month, right?

Hugh Ferguson:

Yeah, it's the end of the session and they basically have to get through, I think we're under 30 decisions left, but issuing 30 decisions in 30 days and they don't meet every day. That's quite a grouping that comes out.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah, they're releasing opinions every Monday and Thursday, is that right?

Hugh Ferguson:

Roughly. I think they released a group on the first, and now their next day is June 8th, on a Thursday, that they have more decisions coming out, but we don't know what those decisions are and they just make them known when they come out.

Justin Draeger:

If you're keeping track, we're expecting two big ones in Higher Ed. We were all watching this morning, like clicking refresh on Supreme Court's website, watching for, we're expecting one on use of race and admissions, and that obviously impacts financial aid as well. And we've had, we've talked about this on podcasts, we've had webinars on this, NASFAA has participated in projects on this. We're watching that one to the extent that race can be used in not only admissions but financial aid.

And then the second one, of course has to do with the Supreme Court and student debt forgiveness. And let's pick up on that one, because breaking news today, Thursday, we just had the Senate take up yesterday debate and then today a vote on the Congressional Review Act on President Biden's regulatory action trying to provide student debt forgiveness up to \$10,000 for most or for many borrowers up to \$20,000 for Pell Grant recipients. Rachel, why don't you catch us up here. Where are we at? What's going on and what's the breaking news?

Rachel Gentry:

Yes. As context prior to today, we did see the House pass the CRA last week. It was on a nearly party line vote. I think there were a couple of Democrats that joined with Republicans, but largely Republicans voting to pass the CRA. It cleared the House and went over to the Senate and I think it's just minutes ago. I don't even think we're at hours ago yet, so just minutes ago we saw the Senate also vote to pass the CRA on a vote of 52 to 46. There were a couple of Democrats, Senators Manchin and Tester that joined with Republicans to pass the bill along with Senator Sinema an Independent. So yeah, it's I think definitely noteworthy that it was not just a party line vote. There were a couple of Democrats that crossed over the aisle and voted with Republicans.

That's the latest news in terms of where things go now. The White House has made pretty clear that if Congress were to pass this Congressional Review Act to overturn the debt relief plan that President

Biden did intend to veto it. Now that we have seen Congress pass the bill if or when President Biden does veto the bill, both chambers would need to have a two-thirds majority in order to override that veto, which although we saw them pass on a majority vote in both the House and Senate this week and last week, we don't expect for either chamber to have enough votes to reach that two-thirds majority to overturn the presidential veto.

Justin Draeger:

Well, let me ask you both, Karen and Rachel, were you guys surprised by ... the House passage was assured, for Republicans have a majority there and this was all set up because the GAO actually ruled that by President Biden using executive action to do this, that it was in fact a rule that allowed the Congress to pursue the Congressional Review Act, which is overturning rules from the previous administration. This was in fact a rule, a regulation. But were you surprised by the Senate vote? I mean, the Senate is held by Democrats, even if it's by one vote. Were you surprised by the vote in the Senate? Karen, were you surprised?

Karen McCarthy:

No. Once I realized that they could just pass it on a simple majority, I thought that they had a chance of getting. That if they had to get 60 votes, I thought, "No, no, they'll never get that." But they really only needed a few, and they got, yeah.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah, because Congressional Re Act is just similar. Rachel, you've joined Karen, are you surprised or not really?

Rachel Gentry:

I wasn't shocked, but I mean, I think it was very much an outstanding question as we've been thinking about this potential over the last couple of weeks and months. I think the Senate was a big question mark. Yesterday, I think it was yesterday, there was a procedural vote that teed up the final vote today and Senators Manchin, Tester, and Sinema joined with Republicans to open debate on the measure. And so I think once we saw that happen, that there were Democrats that were falling in line with Republicans. I think at that point it became more clear to me that we were probably going to see it actually passed the Senate. But I don't know. It was more of a question mark in my mind. I could have seen it going either way.

Justin Draeger:

So, Manchin-

Karen McCarthy:

You Justin, you said you were surprised?

Justin Draeger:

I guess I was in denial. I was in denial. I felt like Democrats would hold the line. I mean, I really did. I thought Democrats might hold the line. Surprise may be too strong of a word. I'm not over here fretting. Because even in his comments, the minority whip John Thune on the Republican side, even acknowledged on the floor today that the President was guaranteed to veto the legislation. The

Republicans know they're not going to win a veto proof majority on this. This was largely procedural, but if you're a member of the GOP right now, your talking point stock just went through the roof. Because Congress just delivered a huge rebuke to the President on student loan forgiveness. There is no way around that. And they did it with Democratic votes. I mean, period. I mean, there's, in terms of Congressional talking points, message delivered.

Now, I guess I'm, maybe surprised is too strong of a word, but they did it by peeling off Senator Manchin, Senator Tester. Now, I'll acknowledge, they come from fairly middle of the road, if not conservative states, and I'll acknowledge they both are up for election in 2024. Senator Manchin himself blasted the student loan forgiveness program this last week, I think he called it reckless and said it added too much to the national debt. Sinema changed from a Democrat to Independent. She's also up for election. I think it's also notable, we were talking before the podcast, the two senators who abstained, Rachel, you gave the math, two senators weren't there. Senator Warner from Virginia. I don't know why he abstained. Senator Bennet from Colorado also abstained. And in the past Senator Bennet has also talked negatively about debt forgiveness. Now, I don't know if ... His abstention wouldn't have moved the needle, but maybe there might have been a strategic reason why he did not vote. He didn't want to cast a vote on this one.

Rachel Gentry:

Yeah, I find it really interesting, Justin, to your point that everyone is expecting the president to veto this, so it won't actually have an effect. I find it very interesting that Democrats were still willing to vote in support of it. I think it speaks to, whether perceived or real, the impact that the conversation around debt forgiveness has in elections. I think that these are our members that were choosing to vote because of how it might impact their reelection in 2024.

Justin Draeger:

I think they've building that in. Part of what Senator Manchin said, and again up for reelection in West Virginia, and I don't think he's actually announced, but presumably will run again, but again, running in West Virginia, said, "Forces hardworking taxpayers who already paid off their loans or did not go to college to shoulder the cost." That is the GOP talking point throughout this entire conversation. And clearly Senator Manchin thinks that lands, at least where he will likely run for reelection. He's also been, although I don't know how much stock you put in this, he's also been floated as sort of like a potential President Biden stand-in if for some reason President Biden can't stand for election.

Now, look, I'm not here calling who will be presidential nominees for Republicans or Democrats. That's a little outside the wheelhouse of NASFAA. I'm just looking at the politics of all of this and the Democrats that the Republicans were able to peel off for this vote. And I'll again just say that maybe surprise is too strong of a word, Karen, for what I was feeling. Maybe I was a little bit more in denial. But yeah, I guess I don't know. I thought maybe more Democrats would hold the line on the vote. All of that to say, as you pointed out, Rachel, this will be vetoed by the White House. Congress does not have a veto proof majority. Ultimately, this still is going to be in the hands of the Supreme Court. At some point in the next three weeks we will have a Supreme Court ruling on debt forgiveness.

The other part that we didn't talk about at least, and I think we did mention this in the webinar that we did last week, Karen, that doesn't get a lot of airtime when we talk about this CRA vote, is it would not only overturn debt forgiveness, but it would have also overturned the payment pause. And the part that we don't even know if it's operationally feasible, but Karen, am I understanding it correctly that it would have also turned back the clock on all of the payment pauses that have been allowed and would have

put students back into payment, repayment immediately, and would it have put in arrears all of the interest that's been paused as well?

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, I think it wouldn't go all the way back, because the CRA can't go all the way back to March of 2020. It can only go back as far as the CRA allows them to do. I think, I don't know, how many repayment pauses have we had. Eight? I don't know which one it goes back to, but not all the way back to the first one. But yeah, that it would have some kind of retroactivity to it in that we've not only had the payment pause, but we've had the 0% interest and that that would be included in there also.

That is, so immediately we and all of our members immediately think, "How would they even do that? What are we going to do? Taking away the repayment pause is one thing, but then are you just going to tack on a bunch of interest and how is that?" Especially with the all, as we've been talking about all of the borrowers going into back into repayment at the same time, and can the servicers handle it and everything that needs to happen to get that machine moving again. The retroactivity piece just from the operational angle sounds very challenging to me, if not impossible.

Justin Draeger:

All right, so in terms of next steps, the White House will most certainly veto. We don't expect there to be a veto proof anywhere near veto proof majority back in Congress. This will meet a quick end and all attention will again turn to the Supreme Court to see what happens there.

All right, other breaking news, we touched on this in last week's policy update right after the business meeting, but the debt ceiling legislation is working its way through Capitol Hill. This has some implications for student aid as well. Rachel, why don't you kick us off and then we'll have a conversation around that?

Rachel Gentry:

Sure. So yeah, after what feels like weeks, maybe longer, of negotiations between Speaker McCarthy and President Biden, it was announced over the weekend that they had struck a deal related to the debt ceiling. And so broadly speaking, this deal set spending caps over the next couple of years and would raise the debt ceiling to prevent a government ... Or actually it would suspend the debt ceiling to prevent a government default. The suspension would be until January 1st, 2025. That pushes the debt ceiling issue past the November 2024 elections. Maybe that timing is a coincidence, but I don't think it is, sort of pushing this off to get through those elections. That's what I think the really big thing is the suspension of the debt ceiling to avoid an impending government default, which is something that we have never seen before.

This bill, which is called the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, would also implement spending caps over the next couple of years. In fiscal year 2024, it depends whether you're looking at Republican messaging or White House messaging, how they're spinning it. But essentially it would more or less flat fund spending for fiscal year 2024 for non-defense programs or for discretionary spending, and then spending will be allowed to grow by about 1% in fiscal year 2025.

Justin Draeger:

All right, let me pause right there for a second, Rachel, and then follow up. Let's translate that to the student aid program. Student aid programs are largely funded through these discretionary funding. The caps, we have these caps that are going to be frozen in place with these small incremental increases in the future. How does that translate then? When we get to the appropriations process, will this impact

into straight funding? Will we see increases? What are we likely to see? And when it comes to Pell funding or federal work study?

Rachel Gentry:

I think there's still a lot to be determined in how this shakes out, but I think it's fair to say that these caps are going to make increases challenging over the next couple of years. Again, it depends where you're looking at. I think both sides, because this was a deal struck between Democrats and Republicans, both sides are claiming victory on different aspects of this deal, but I don't really think there's any way you can look at it and say, "This is definitely going to bring increases to our programs." I think it's going to continue to be a really challenging funding environment in terms of increases to the student aid programs.

Justin Draeger:

In the last couple years we've seen what, roughly \$900 increases to the Pell Grant program over the last two years. Those days are, that would be really hard to do under this deal because that would mean cuts to other programs, because the overall bucket of spending for education and healthcare is now capped. If we have increases, other programs would have dramatic cuts.

Rachel Gentry:

That's right. I think sometimes people are curious why NASFAA might weigh in on these higher level funding issues outside of just advocating for increases to Pell and to the campus space aid programs. But part of the reason that we along with many other education groups are active in this broader appropriation space is because if the overall pot of money that goes to fund all of the different discretionary programs, all of the different programs across various federal agencies, if that pot is smaller or is not growing, it makes it really difficult to get increases to the individual programs that we really care about.

Justin Draeger:

All right, crisis hopefully averted. We understand that there are some senators out there rattling their savers about, "I might still sink this thing," and that's a Senate procedural. Let's set that aside for a second. Let's assume it's past the House. We're going to have to still work on this in the Senate, but it gets everything through, crisis averted, game of chicken averted. The next game of chicken would normally be a government shutdown with the budget. As I understand it, there's something in the debt ceiling that paves the way for us to deal with that crisis as well. Is that right? Have we taken care of the next game of chicken too?

Rachel Gentry:

Well, I'm never going to say we've taken care of the next game of chicken, because you never know. But yes, there is something in this agreement that is in the spirit of what you just said, Justin. In this bill there is a provision that would basically ensure that if Congress were to not finalize the appropriations process before January one, so for this next coming year, January 1 of 2024, there would be an automatic continuing resolution, which is essentially just a funding extension maintaining existing funding levels through the end of that fiscal year. That would prevent a government shutdown and there would also be a 1% funding cut for the following year. This is really meant to force the hand of Congress and try to incentivize Congress to finalize an appropriations package prior to January 1.

Justin Draeger:

Well, that seems to favor Republicans though, who want a cut in spending, doesn't it?

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, yeah, so what's their incentive there?

Justin Draeger:

Incentivizes Democrats to really work towards some compromises, doesn't it?

Rachel Gentry:

It does, yep.

Justin Draeger:

And I also find it that they're acknowledging that the probes won't be done by October 1.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, I noticed that too. It's not, they already gave you a little bit of leeway there.

Justin Draeger:

We've totally given up on the federal fiscal year, so that's out the window. They said by January 1. All right, so if Congress is going to avoid a government shutdown ... So, there won't be a government shutdown, if they don't finish the appropriations process, we'll have an automatic continuing resolution with a 1% funding across the board funding cut, which would then of course impact all of our programs in some way.

Rachel Gentry:

Right.

Justin Draeger:

Okay. There was one other provision in here that I saw both sides were claiming victory on, and that had to do with sunseting the student loan payment pause and the interest accrual pause. Catch us up on that, Rachel?

Rachel Gentry:

Yes, so also included in this deal was a requirement that the Biden administration would resume student loan repayment, resume the collection of loans and charging interest after August 30th. This is really, I think just a codification of what the Biden administration had already announced. They had already announced that payment would be resuming 60 days after either June 30th or whenever we have clarification from the courts. But this would really put that into law and ensure that it happens, which is certainly, based on what we just talked about with the CRA is definitely something that Republicans want to see happen.

Justin Draeger:

What was interesting about this, and I saw this from both Chairwoman Fox's office from Speaker McCarthy and from a Biden spokesperson, was that the Biden folks were saying, claiming victory like, "Yeah, we were planning on doing this the entire time. So, victory." And then I saw from Republicans, from both Speaker McCarthy and Chairwoman Fox, "Victory. We are holding them to starting the repayment machine." Which from both sides, I'm not claiming Boulder Dash on either side. I'm saying, the Republicans didn't trust the Biden administration to actually do it, start the repayment machine. And the Biden administration is saying, "We were going to do this the entire time anyway." Now both sides are bound in the debt deal in legislation that this is what's going to happen. It is actually going to restart. It is bound up in legislation that is about to be passed by the House and the Senate and agreed to by the White House, so-

Karen McCarthy:

Now we can with confidence say-

Justin Draeger:

That's right.

Karen McCarthy:

... we will not have an extension of this.

Justin Draeger:

I was going to say, if we're talking in Vegas odds, now I feel very confident. Now it has actually happened.

Rachel Gentry:

I want to see it signed into law before-

Justin Draeger:

Okay.

Karen McCarthy:

Okay, Rachel.

Justin Draeger:

Fair enough. So Rachel, so it's passed the House and it passed with actually the majority of Republicans, although not all Republicans, and a super majority of Democrats, although not all Democrats. But it's passed the house and now we're waiting for it to pass the Senate, which we presume it will do, and then it'll be signed by the president, yeah?

Rachel Gentry:

Yes. Like you said, Justin, there are a couple of, I think, outstanding question marks with various senators who have concerns. I think that's on both sides with different provisions in the bill, but the majority and minority leader in the Senate have both expressed support, so we do expect it to pass. I think time is definitely of the essence here. Treasury Secretary Yellen has warned that it could be as soon as Monday that the government is not able to pay its bills if we don't see the debt ceiling

suspended or lifted prior to that point. And so I think the Senate will be moving pretty swiftly to get this on the floor. I think timing is still a little bit TBD. I know that there were some reports that the timing could be delayed until June 6th, the latest estimates by treasury are that we would need to see something enacted by June 5th. But yeah, I think a lot's still TBD.

Justin Draeger:

That's the news. Here's a couple takeaways and I wonder if you all agree or if you see things differently or have other takeaways. The last 10 years it seems like we've been operating from the extremes. The extremes sometimes of the parties have been running the show. You take the extremes of either party, either ideology, and they've been running rampant. This is definitely a deal from the middle. It's the return of the pragmatists. And if you look at the votes-

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, I saw that.

Justin Draeger:

The votes are all from the middle. The people who showed up in the House to vote all came from the middle of the parties. That's why you have the majority, two thirds of the Republicans, super majority of the Democrats, you have, the people who are unhappy are speaking from the ideological extremes of the parties.

McCarthy and President Biden, Speaker McCarthy and President Biden negotiated this from the middle. And so, if you've been unhappy about the ideological extremism over the last decade, this is definitely a turn from that. This is definitely a return from the middle. If you're still unhappy, maybe you're just unhappy. I mean, that's sort of my takeaway. Maybe you're just unhappy, because this is definitely different from the last 10 years where it's always been extremes fighting extremes. I don't know if it'll last. I don't know if Speaker McCarthy hangs onto his gavel, who knows? I mean, like I said since 2016 I'm no longer in the political prediction game.

But what's also interesting is that who is supposed to be announcing their candidacy for presidency on the Republican side in the next week are also pragmatists. I think we're expecting Christie to announce again next week. Pence to announce next week. I don't know if they're ideological middles exactly, but they are pragmatists. I don't know if they'll get attraction, but I don't know, this deal at least is a return to the middle in terms of negotiation. And it'll just be interesting to see if it lasts, especially as we get closer and closer to a presidential election.

I also thought it was interesting that at the end of all this, President Biden I think issued a statement where he literally, I think he thanked Speaker McCarthy, which is also a weird turn in politics. Thanked him in terms of the negotiating and all of that. At the end of all of this, the speaker and the president thanked one another. They issued statements complimenting one another. This is what's been missing for a long time in politics. I don't know-

Rachel Gentry:

I would also-

Justin Draeger:

It's a return to what we used to have in politics.

Rachel Gentry:

And also maybe vintage Joe Biden.

Justin Draeger:

That's true.

Rachel Gentry:

Joe Biden was known for being someone that would make bipartisan deals and negotiate in good faith. And I think, you have to be at a certain place within your party to win a nomination and win a presidential election. But I think maybe it's a little bit of what he's been as a career politician all along.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah, it might not make good fodder for late night cable news on either side, but I don't watch late night cable news, so maybe it's not great for ratings. But I do think it's good politics and I think it's good for the electorate, because we do have people who elect different people with different ideologies, and if you want things to get done, this is how things get done.

Let's change gears just a little bit, Karen, this last week we joined the higher education community and sending up a letter to Congress about streamlining and expanding SNAP eligibility. There's an entire conversation related to the debt ceiling, and I think even larger than that about SNAP in general. And I think we do see some pretty big political differences on SNAP. Why don't you catch us up on the letter and maybe on this conversation in general, where are we?

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, I would say, I'll start with in general part. I feel like we in the financial aid community have gotten a lot more involved with means tested benefits over, I don't know, the last 10 or so years. I think historically our schools, our members have always focused on the cost of attendance and meeting the cost of attendance with Title IV aid. And I feel like we are expanding our horizons that, "Hey, there are all these other programs that can help to provide food and housing and things that are in the cost of attendance. And we should be helping to direct people towards these other sources of aid and these other benefits that they might be eligible for." There's that going on. And then I think at the same time in our world, and this also pulls in the means tested benefits things, we have been focused on, you're trying to get direct access to other federal data that the federal government has.

In our world it's about getting the IRS data for purposes of aid eligibility. It can also go in the other direction as well. People who are eligible for certain amounts of Title IV aid, maybe they can automatically qualify for means tested benefits. Kind of sharing all of that information and breaking down all of these silos that exist within the federal government. During the pandemic the eligibility criteria for college students loosened up somewhat. And those qualifiers recently expired at the end of the public health emergency, that was May 11th. I think they're in place for a short period of time, but those exemptions for college students will be going away, so some college students will be losing access to their SNAP eligibility that we saw.

And so all of that is going on at the same time that the agriculture committee in Congress is talking about the Farm Bill. The Farm Bill is something that we in financial aid world don't usually get involved in, so a little bit outside of our space. But ACE coordinated a letter to the Ag committee to try to get them to consider expanding eligibility for SNAP benefits, because SNAP benefits are run out of the Department of Agriculture. And so it's very parallel to a lot of things going on in our world, and I'm

thinking about the FAFSA and Pell eligibility and that both of the asks in there are to streamline the application process so it's easier for people to apply for SNAP, and at the same time to loosen up the eligibility criteria so more people get SNAP. I'm thinking about FAFSA simplification and making Pell eligibility easier to get, making the formula more generous. So, it's kind of like a parallel universe I feel like over there in agriculture when you're talking about the SNAP benefits.

And at the same time, I mean, all these pieces are fitting together, because we haven't spent a lot of time, there hasn't been movement on this yet. But in the FAFSA Simplification Act back from 2020 it allows FAFSA applicants to authorize sharing some of their FAFSA data directly with the agencies that are determining SNAP eligibility. It's very similar to the IRS direct data sharing. If the Department of Ed determines someone say is eligible for a maximum Pell, that could be shared directly with an agency that could then theoretically say, "Hey, now you're eligible for SNAP benefits too." Which is all the directional arrows are going in all of these different ways, which is really exciting. With the pandemic, somebody who had a zero EFC would qualify for SNAP, but they had to turn in an aid offer or their SAR or something like that to prove that. This authorization that's in the FAFSA Simplification Act would get rid of all of that middleman. Similar to what we're doing with the IRS direct data sharing on our side.

Justin Draeger:

You apply once, you qualify for all these benefits, even though they're at different agencies.

Karen McCarthy:

We've always been focused on using eligibility from other programs to help us when someone files a FAFSA. They've already received this other program, now they're filling out a FAFSA. But it could have gone in the other direction. The first thing they do is file a FAFSA and they're not receiving these other benefits. So, the directional arrows can go in different ways. All of that is really exciting. I feel like that is part of what ACE was trying to get across in their letter is, if you change the eligibility criteria and perhaps say, "If you have a zero or a negative student aid index," when we get there, "you qualify for SNAP benefits." And then we also have this authorization that we could use, then this would make this process a whole lot easier for all of these applicants.

But then at the same time that the Farm Bill discussions are going on, we also had the debt ceiling negotiations going on. And as we know what ultimately ended up in there, that is what led some of the very progressive Democrats not to vote for it were these new work requirements tightening the belt of SNAP eligibility. So, going in the other direction of where the momentum has been over the last few years with regards to SNAP.

Justin Draeger:

Where do we expect this to go given the larger conversation between Republicans and Democrats? Do we think there'll be any receptivity to this on the Hill?

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, I don't know. I feel like through the debt ceiling negotiations, the work requirements and the SNAP thing seem to be a hot topic, hot issue where there was a lot of disagreement. I feel like that just draws negative attention to the program and that, so when some of these other initiatives start floating out there like, "Hey, we can do this direct data sharing and get more people into SNAP eligibility," that it might draw more attention than it would have if it were happening before the debt ceiling negotiations.

Justin Draeger:

Do we know for sure that the work requirements that the Republicans are concerned about would apply to college students as well? Because college students wouldn't necessarily have the time or the ability to work while they're attending school.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, college students generally do not qualify for SNAP unless they meet one of the exemptions. And one of the exemptions that we have reverted back to after the pandemic is that they had to be working in a work study job or planning to work in a work study job, or there are a bunch of other exemptions about supporting dependents. If you are working full-time while you're going to school, obviously that meets the work requirements as well. But I feel like the work requirements in general have gotten a lot more attention in recent weeks because of the debt ceiling. So, I don't know if that will be revisited in future conversations about potentially expanding the universe of potential SNAP eligible college students.

Justin Draeger:

Thanks, Karen. Thanks, Rachel. As always, good to see you all. Thanks everybody for joining us for another edition of "Off the Cuff". Thank you to Hugh for helping us prepare, produce, and edit this week's episode. Remember to send us your comments, remember to subscribe on your podcast app of choice. Leave us a rating that helps other people find the podcast, and we will see you again very soon.