

REPORT · SEPTEMBER 2026

The Cornhusker State *Affordability* Crisis

Trump is undercutting Nebraska's farmers and ranchers while costs rise for families losing health care and food aid.

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Nebraska is *buckling* under the weight of Donald Trump's policies.

19 months into Donald Trump's second term in office, Nebraska is buckling under the weight of Donald Trump's policies. Nebraska is the beef state, and Trump is squeezing the industry at every turn. His plan to import hundreds of thousands of tons of foreign beef will squeeze ranchers even as they've spent the past year and a half battling rising beef imports and the smallest cattle herd since the early 1950s. Nebraska beef plants are already closing – as are local farms, which are projecting massive losses for 2026 as Trump's war with Iran hikes diesel and fertilizer prices, along with his tariffs on top import partners like Canada and China.

But ranchers and farmers aren't the only ones suffering in the Cornhusker State. The average Nebraska household has had to pay an extra \$3,700+ for goods and services under Trump, driving even Republicans to call him out as his approval falls into the negative. Energy costs are rising for Nebraskans, from gasoline to electricity, as are childcare and housing costs. Average child care costs in Nebraska now exceed more than twice what the federal government considers affordable at the median household salary. Renters and homeowners alike are being squeezed as demand outstrips supply in the state. Last year, Trump and Republicans in Congress also cut over \$1 trillion in health care and food assistance. Now, food assistance enrollment is down nearly 22 percent as grocery bills rise, and over 75,000 are projected to lose health care coverage as insurance premiums skyrocket.

— BY THE NUMBERS

The Cornhusker State affordability crisis, in figures.

\$3,700+

Extra the average Nebraska household has paid for goods and services under Trump.

Joint Economic Committee

-2

Trump's net approval in Nebraska (points) at the end of August – a state he carried by roughly 20 points in 2024.

Newsweek

300,000t

Foreign beef Trump's August proclamation imports at a reduced tariff rate – undercutting Nebraska ranchers.

New York Times

1951

Last year the U.S. cattle herd was as small as it is now – Nebraska already lost 3,200 Tyson Lexington jobs.

Food Dive

+29%

Jump in Nebraska farm bankruptcies last year – second-highest in the Midwest behind Iowa.

American Farm Bureau

78,275

Nebraskans projected to lose health care coverage under the Trump-GOP cuts.

KETV

\$3.6B

Cut to Nebraska hospitals over the next decade under the Trump-GOP law, per the Nebraska Hospital Association.

10/11 Now

35,000

Nebraskans kicked off SNAP food assistance since the Trump-GOP bill – a 22% drop, the steepest single-month decline since at least 2014.

Nebraska Examiner

SECTION 01 · COST OF LIVING

Cost-of-living is Nebraskans' *top concern*.

The cost of living and health care affordability are topping the list of concerns for Nebraska voters heading into the midterms. The average Nebraska household has had to pay an additional \$3,700+ for goods and services under Trump, according to the Joint Economic Committee. Nebraska Republicans are even saying it out loud; Rep. Don Bacon said in August that Trump “makes light of the affordability question,” and he blamed the President’s tariffs for worsening inflation. Trump’s standing has cratered even in a state he carried by roughly 20 points: his net approval in Nebraska has fallen to negative 2 points as of the end of August.

“*Trump makes light of the affordability question.*”

– REP. DON BACON (R-NE) · AUGUST 2026

SECTION 02 · RANCHERS

Trump pulled the rug out from under *Nebraska's ranchers*.

Nebraska, the heart of the American cattle industry, is in the crosshairs of Trump's beef importation policies. In August, Trump signed a proclamation importing 300,000 metric tons of foreign beef at a reduced tariff rate, with a commitment that it would be sold at 25 percent below market prices. Beef imports were already up 13 percent from 2025 before he acted. Republicans from Nebraska and neighboring cattle states warned the White House that it is hurting the producers who elected him, and Rep. Mike Flood even said he opposed a "tariff regime that undercuts American ranchers." More imported beef lowers the price ranchers are paid for cattle, and the national herd is at its smallest level since 1951. Nebraska has already absorbed the fallout of a shrinking herd, with Tyson permanently closing its Lexington beef plant in January and ending roughly 3,200 jobs in a town of about 11,000. Consumers are not being spared either: a pound of ground beef averaged \$6.89 in July, up 10 percent from a year earlier.

Trump's damage control is not working.

Even as the Trump administration has rolled out efforts to decrease costs for Nebraska cattle ranchers, livestock economists said the package will not raise beef supplies or bring down retail prices for another year or two.

SECTION 03 · FARM COUNTRY

Nebraska farm country is staring down a *generational downturn*.

Nebraska farmers are projecting massive losses for 2026 thanks to Trump's economic policies. Across the country, major row crop losses are projected to exceed \$31 billion in 2026. Nebraska farm bankruptcies jumped up 29 percent last year, the second-highest total in the Midwest behind Iowa, prompting Nebraska agricultural leaders to sign a bipartisan letter warning Congress that "the indiscriminate and haphazard nature of the current tariff policies" has significantly damaged the state's farm economy. The Nebraska Corn Growers Association says its growers have been running at little-to-no profit, or at outright losses, for years on end.

— *Trump's trade war threatens Nebraska's biggest customers.*

Nebraska is the fifth-largest agricultural exporting state, shipping \$8.19 billion in farm products in 2024, led by beef, corn, and soybeans. Trump's trade wars have squeezed the state's exports. Trump's 50 percent tariff on Canadian goods took effect on August 22, even though Canada is a top supplier for Nebraska farmers and a top-2 export partner. Meanwhile, the Trump administration is renegotiating the USMCA yet again, even as the agreement continues to support about 10,000 Nebraska jobs.

— *Diesel costs are at a record high right as harvest season begins.*

Thanks to Trump's war with Iran, the national average retail diesel price just hit a new record high, with diesel distillate inventories at their lowest level since 1982. For Nebraska farmers heading into fall harvest, elevated diesel prices could add thousands of dollars in costs, and analysts warn the squeeze will push grocery prices higher for everyone else.

SECTION 04 · HEALTH CARE

Nebraska is already implementing Trump's health care cuts *ahead of schedule*.

The Trump-GOP law cut over \$1 trillion from Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act, the largest health care cuts in American history. Nebraska volunteered to go first. On May 1, the state became the first in the nation to impose the law's Medicaid work requirements, eight months before the federal deadline, and on August 1, it became the first to remove people from coverage for failing to clear them. Around 78,275 Nebraskans are projected to lose health care under the GOP's cuts. The Nebraska Hospital Association estimates about 23,000 Nebraskans will lose coverage in 2026 alone. After the passage of the law, Nebraska ACA enrollment is down 23 percent — among the steepest drops in the country, after nearly 30,000 Nebraskans lost coverage following steep premium hikes. For example, Medica (the insurer covering the most Nebraska marketplace enrollees) requested a 36 percent rate increase for 2026.

Nebraska hospitals on the brink.

The Nebraska Hospital Association warned the Trump-GOP law would mean a \$3.6 billion cut to Nebraska hospitals over the next decade and said 44 percent of the state's rural hospitals were already losing money. Nebraska hospitals have already absorbed nearly \$1.1 billion in uncompensated and charity care, and 55 percent of them report that this fiscal year will be challenging or very challenging. Already, Protect Our Care's Hospital Crisis Watch has tracked 10 Nebraska health care facilities that are at risk of cuts or closure, have announced cuts, or have already closed since Trump and the GOP slashed health care.

SECTION 05 · SMALL BUSINESS

Nebraska small businesses are paying *Trump's tariff bill*.

Nebraska importers paid more than \$480 million in tariffs between spring 2025 and spring 2026, according to small business advocates. Although the Supreme Court struck down the IEEPA tariffs in February, almost no Nebraska importers qualify for the refunds. Trump's additional tariffs on over 99% of U.S. imports all remain in force. The President of Lincoln's Chamber of Commerce said he was "very confident" that most manufacturers in the city have been hit. Omaha state senator and small retailer Megan Hunt described bills far beyond what she budgeted for on imported goods.

SECTION 06 · ENERGY

Nebraska energy costs are *climbing*.

Under Trump, energy costs are rising for Nebraskans, from gasoline to electricity. Gas across Nebraska is approaching \$4 a gallon, up from \$2.94 a year earlier. Regional gas prices are up more than 45% since January, largely thanks to Trump's war with Iran. Nationally, household electric bills are up 15 percent since Trump took office, far outpacing wage growth. Meanwhile, Omaha Public Power District raised rates 6.3 percent for 2026, and Nebraska Public Power District added another 3 percent for retail customers.

Trump killed Nebraska clean energy investments.

Since Trump took office, over 400 clean energy projects nationwide have been canceled, delayed, or cut back – stalling or canceling over \$75 billion in investment and more than 145,000 jobs, according to Climate Power. In Nebraska, the Trump administration terminated a \$62.4 million grant that would have reached more than 9,000 Nebraska households and added over 60 megawatts of local power generation. As a result, communities including South Sioux City and the Village of Walthill scrapped their projects.

SECTION 07 · FAMILY COSTS

Raising a family in Nebraska costs *more* under Trump.

Child care in Nebraska now averages \$18,147 a year, roughly \$1,512 a month or 21% of the median household salary in the state. Meanwhile, the Department of Health and Human Services considers child care affordable only at a level of 10% of household income or less. Inadequate access to care costs the state an estimated \$1.74 billion in lost business output annually. Meanwhile, the school year will cost families nearly \$4,000 per child this year, up nearly 11 percent from last year, and nearly half of parents plan to take on debt to afford it.

SECTION 08 · HOUSING & INSURANCE

Nebraska housing and insurance costs *keep rising*.

Since Trump took office again, Nebraska families have had to spend an additional \$554 on housing costs. Renters and homeowners alike are being squeezed by housing costs in Nebraska. Rent in Nebraska has climbed, and renters in Douglas County are among the most cost-burdened in the state. Homeowners are squeezed from another direction: the cost of homeowners insurance in Nebraska is up 20 percent since 2023, making Nebraska the fourth most expensive state in the country for home insurance, with another 13 percent increase projected by the end of 2026. Likewise, statewide property taxes are on pace to grow about 4 percent a year, reaching \$8.27 billion by 2035, according to the Nebraska Farm Bureau. Homebuilders estimate Trump's tariffs have added \$10,900 to the cost of a typical home.

SECTION 09 · HELP RIPPED AWAY

Help *ripped away* from Nebraskans.

Trump and Republicans in Congress cut \$187 billion in food assistance. Since the law passed last July, Nebraska SNAP enrollment has fallen to 116,000 people from nearly 150,000 – a drop of about 35,000 Nebraskans, or nearly 22 percent. The state has experienced the steepest single-month decline since at least 2014. Immigrant and refugee families have been hit hardest, with participation down 38 percent among those populations. Omaha food pantries are even reporting a surge in first-time clients as SNAP shrinks and grocery bills climb.

DEFEND AMERICA ACTION

DEFEND AMERICA ACTION • SEPTEMBER 2026

Working Nebraskans are paying the price. It's time to fight back.

Defend America Action is a 501(c)(4) organization dedicated to defending working families from the destructive policies of the Trump administration and Congressional Republicans.

Every figure and citation in this report links to its source – from the Nebraska Farm Bureau and Nebraska Hospital Association to the Joint Economic Committee, Climate Power, KFF, and Nebraska's independent newsrooms.

DefendAmericaAction.org

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