

ROLLINS V. RHODE ISLAND STATE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

HEADNOTE

by Ira Brad Matetsky

Source: U.S. Supreme Court website (under “Orders of the Court”).

Opinion by: Ketanji Brown Jackson (given in source).

Opinion date: November 7, 2025 (given in source).

Citation: Rollins v. Rhode Island State Council of Churches, 5 Rapp no. 20, 2025 WL 3124183 (2025).

Additional information:

This document was issued as an order by Justice Jackson and appeared on the Supreme Court website under the designation “Miscellaneous Order,” but as discussed in the introductory essay to this issue, it had the same effect as an in-chambers opinion and so is included here. The litigation arose during the October-November 2025 federal government shutdown, after the Administration determined that sufficient funds were not available to pay full SNAP (food-stamp) benefits to recipients. Several non-profit groups and municipalities sued the Secretary of Agriculture seeking to compel her to allocate other available funds to fully fund the benefits. The Administration sought an emergency stay from the First Circuit, which denied relief in an abbreviated order stating that a more detailed opinion would follow. The Administration then turned to the Supreme Court and Jackson, as circuit justice for the First Circuit, granted a two-day “administrative stay” to allow the First Circuit to publish its complete decision. Jackson’s issuance of this stay surprised some observers, but others noted that the full Court could have taken control of the stay application and issued a longer-term stay if Jackson had not acted on her own. Indeed, a few days later, the full Court extended the stay for another two days, with Jackson the only noted dissenter. Subsequently, Congress passed and the President signed an appropriation bill, mooted the controversy, and the stay application was withdrawn.

OPINION

Supreme Court of the United States

No. 25A539

BROOKE L. ROLLINS, SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE, ET AL.,

Applicants,

v.

RHODE ISLAND STATE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, ET AL.

ORDER

The applicants are seeking a stay of two orders of the United States District Court for the District of Rhode Island, case No. 1:25-cv-569. See D. Ct. Minute Entry (Oct. 31, 2025) and Docket Number 34 (Nov. 6, 2025). These orders require the applicants to fully fund benefits for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (“SNAP”) for the month of November, and to distribute that funding by the end of the day on November 7, 2025 (today).

Earlier today, the applicants asked the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit to stay the District Court’s orders pending appeal, and to issue an administrative stay to facilitate its consideration of that stay motion. At 6:08 p.m., the First Circuit denied the applicants’ request for an administrative stay, but stated that it “intend[s] to issue a decision on [the stay pending appeal] motion as quickly as possible.” *Rhode Island State Council of Churches v. Rollins*, No. 25-2089 (CA1 Nov. 7, 2025).

The applicants filed an application in this Court this evening, requesting a stay of the two District Court orders “pending the disposition of the government’s appeal to the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit and, if the court of appeals affirms those orders, pending the timely filing and disposition of a petition for a writ of certiorari in this Court.” Application at 1. The applicants assert that, without intervention from this Court, they will have to “transfer an estimated \$4 billion by tonight” to fund SNAP benefits through November. *Ibid.*

Given the First Circuit’s representations, an administrative stay is required to facilitate the First Circuit’s expeditious resolution of the pending stay motion.

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IT IS ORDERED that the District Court's orders are hereby administratively stayed pending disposition of the motion for a stay pending appeal in the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit in case No. 25-2089 or further order of the undersigned or of the Court. This administrative stay will terminate forty-eight hours after the First Circuit's resolution of the pending motion, which the First Circuit is expected to issue with dispatch.

/s/ Ketanji Brown Jackson
Associate Justice of the Supreme
Court of the United States
Dated this 7th
day of November, 2025