

Welfare Reform Reform
WWS 593I
Tuesday, 9:00 am - 12:10 pm

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Reading Materials Required:

On-Line Materials (citations given)

Reading Packet (Available at Pequod)

Poor Support, David Ellwood (Available at the U. Store)

Welfare Reform, The Next Act, Alan Weil and Kenneth Finegold, eds. (U-Store)

Description of Class:

In 1996, Congress passed, and President Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). PRWORA effectively reversed a 61-year trend of federal involvement in welfare policy by eliminating America's primary cash assistance program for families with children -- Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) -- and replacing it with the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant. Under the TANF block grant, states are generally free to design welfare programs in any way they see fit, albeit with some federal restrictions such as work requirements, life-time limits on aid, and restrictions for immigrants. Proponents of this law hail its success, pointing to large declines in the welfare rolls and increased employment for former welfare recipients. Critics point to evidence of increases in extreme childhood poverty, an over-dependence on a low-wage job market, and increased hardships for families in finding adequate housing, child-care and medical care.

Lawmakers included a sunset provision in the 1996 legislation; that is, after five years the law would expire and need to be reauthorized and reappropriated for funding to the states to continue. In 2002, the law was temporarily extended, and a more permanent reauthorization bill is making its way through Congress right now. While the thrust of the 1996 law was getting welfare recipients off the rolls and into work, much of the current discussion is about the role of marriage and out-of-wedlock child birth rates. In this class, then, we will examine the law prior to 1996, the changes made in the law with PRWORA, and the proposed changes currently in play. We will examine ways in which this law has been evaluated for its success and failure, and we will look at how states use their federal dollars and propose alternative budgetary schemes for state low-income programs.

Description of Paper: The paper will in the form of a memorandum to a United States Senator. In this 10-page memo, the student will recommend how the current law should

be modified upon reauthorization. Ideally, the memo will focus on one particular issue (for example, funding, child care, work requirements, time-limits) that should be modified in the new law.

Grades: The overall grade for each student will be weighted as follows:

- 70% Paper
- 30% Class Participation

SYLLABUS

Class 1. Tuesday, November 4, 2003

Introduction: Organization of Course

Lecture: Historical Overview of Welfare Policy in the United States – From Poor Laws to Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

Class 2. Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Lecture: The Intellectual Debate about Welfare Reform: Shaping the Current System

Reading:

- Poor Support, David Ellwood, Chapters 1,2,3,4,5,7 (U. Store)
- Losing Ground, Charles Murray, Chapters 11, 12, 14, and 17 (Pages 227-236) (in reading packet)
- Beyond Entitlement, Lawrence Mead, Chapters 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 (in reading packet)

Assignment:

Three groups of students will give oral presentations to the class about the philosophies and visions for welfare programs that the writers assigned for today's class present, particularly the role of work in a welfare program. What arguments does each writer make in defense of his vision? What are the economic, moral, and social underpinnings of his or her vision? Is this vision translatable into a welfare program that helps families?

Class 3. Tuesday, November 18, 2003

Lecture: Current welfare law: TANF and Child Care

Reading:

- 2000 Greenbook, Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, Section 7 and 9: (Skim the charts.) (on-line at <http://www.access.gpo.gov/wmprints/index.html>; click on "Selected Publications;

click on 2000 Greenbook”; type “TANF” in the search field; then type “child care” in the search field)

- Welfare Reform, The Next Act, Chapters Introduction, 1, 2, 7, 12

Reference: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) law: 42 U.S.C. § 601 *et seq.* In particular, read §§601, 602, 603, 604; Skim § 605; Read §§ 606, 607, 608, 609; Skim §§ 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616; Read §§ 617, 618, 619. Skip “History/Ancillary Laws and Directives” sections. (on-line at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>)

Class 4. Tuesday, November 25, 2003

Lecture: Proposed Changes under Reauthorization: The House and Senate Approaches and the Marriage Promotion Debate

Reading:

- “One Step Forward or Two Steps Back? Why the BiPartisan Senate Finance Bill Reflects a Better Approach to TANF Reauthorization than the House Bill,” Shawn Fremstad, et al. (full report) Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Sept. 19, 2002 (on-line at www.cbpp.org)
- “More than a Dating Service?” State Activities Designed to Strengthen and Promote Marriage,” Mary Parke and Theodora Ooms (on-line at www.clasp.org)
- Welfare Reform, The Next Act, Chapter 3
- Video: Let’s Get Married

Class 5. Tuesday, December 2, 2003 (Evening class?)

Lecture: Is Welfare Reform Working? Findings and Assessment

Guest Speaker: Anu Rangarajan, Mathematica Policy Research

Reading:

- Work First Evaluation: Current and Former WFNJ Recipients: How are they and their children faring 40 months later? Mathematica Policy Research, Robert Wood, Anu Rangarajan, Mathematica, January 2002 (on-line at www.mathematica-mpr.com; go to “publications” column and search by author and title)
- Welfare Reform, The Next Act, Chapters 4, 5, 6

Class 6. Tuesday, December 9, 2003

Lecture: Looking Forward: What is our Welfare System supposed to be? Should a “welfare” system be our anti-poverty solution?

- Welfare Reform, The Next Act, Chapter 9
- It Takes A Nation, Rebecca Blank, Chapter 7 (reading packet)