

This Week in Washington

Personal Responsibility, Work, and Family Protection Act

As you may well know, in 1996, Congress was faced with a failing welfare program that did little to assist individuals in the transition from dependence on a government welfare check --- to independence of earning a paycheck. For far too many, under the old Welfare program the American dream was out of reach.

In response, the Republican led Congress rose to the challenged and produced public policy with remarkable results that created hope and opportunity.

Today, in passing this legislation we have a chance to build upon this success through improving our current Welfare program through the passage of the Personal Responsibility, Work, and Family Protection Act. The following are the provisions of the act:

Increasing Minimum Work Requirements:

- Under current law, at least 50 percent of TANF families are required to participate in work and other activities designed to help them achieve self-sufficiency, but in many States far fewer actually work. H.R. 4700 increases the work requirement by 5 percent per year, so that States are required to have 70 percent of welfare families working and participating in other job-preparation activities 40 hours per week by FY 2007.
- The measure allows States to continue to get "credit" toward work participation rates for future caseload declines.
- The measure eliminates the separate work requirement standard for two-parent families.
- Additionally, 17 "superachiever" States with caseload declines well above the national average since 1995 will receive an additional credit toward the rising State work rate.

Requiring Welfare Recipients to Put in a Full Work Week and Providing Additional Opportunities for Education and Training:

- The measure builds on the successful work requirements of the 1996 welfare reform law by requiring welfare recipients to work 40 hours per week - either at a job or in programs or activities designed to help them achieve independence.
- H.R. 4700 also builds into the calculation a four-week cushion for sick leave and holidays, simulating a typical American work schedule.
- The measure makes special accommodations for parents with infants and individuals who need substance abuse treatment, rehabilitation or special work-related training. As much as two days per week can be spent in these activities and be counted as "work".
- 3 months of State-designed activities, including substance abuse or mental health treatment to improve welfare recipients' ability to go to work, and up to four months of education or training programs leading to work during a 24-month period may be counted by the State as direct work.

Protecting Children & Strengthening Families:

- H.R. 4700 continues historically high levels of support for child care (currently \$4.8 billion per year) through the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), while adding \$2 billion in additional funds for child care in the coming 5 years.

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Today in History

1866 - The U.S. Congress authorized the first 5-cent piece to be minted.

1868 - U.S. President Andrew Johnson was acquitted during the Senate impeachment, by one vote.

1879 - The Treaty of Gandamak between Russia and England set up the Afghan state.

1910 - The U.S. Bureau of Mines was authorized by the U.S. Congress.

1929 - The first Academy Awards were held in Hollywood.

1966 - The Beach Boys album "Pet Sounds" was released.

1970 - Randy Bachman left the Guess Who.

1971 - U.S. postage for a one-ounce first class stamp was increased from 6 to 8 cents.

1983 - Michael Jackson introduced the "moonwalk".

1988 - The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that police do not have to have a search warrant to search discarded garbage.

1990 - Sammy Davis Jr, American entertainer, died of throat cancer.

1991 - Queen Elizabeth II became the first British monarch to address the U.S. Congress.

2000 - U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton was nominated to run for U.S. Senator in New York.

2002 - Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones is released.

From www.on-this-day.com

This Week in Washington cont.

Improving Child Care Quality:

- Consistent with President Bush's new early childhood education initiative, Good Start, Grow Smart, H.R. 4700 encourages States to address the cognitive needs of children so that they are developmentally prepared to enter school.
- The measure also encourages States to utilize resources in their State to collect and disseminate information to parents, consumers, and child care providers.
- Moreover, the bill emphasizes the importance of quality child care and education by requesting States to address the quality of care available to children and parents.
- The bill requires States to devote at least six percent of funds from the CCDBG to improve child care quality, and establishes permissible uses for those funds.
- The measure also requests that States work to meet the needs of parents eligible for assistance who have children with special needs, work non-traditional hours, or require infant and toddler care.

Strengthening Child Support Enforcement:

- H.R. 4700 provides financial incentives for the States to give more money to mothers and children, especially mothers who have left welfare. Under current law, government keeps a substantial portion of the money collected to pay past-due child support in cases of families that have received welfare.

Encouraging Healthy Marriages and Two-Parent Married Families:

- H.R. 4700 directs up to \$300 million annually for programs that encourage healthy, stable marriages. These programs include pre-marital education and counseling, as well as research and technical assistance into promising approaches that work.
- Additionally, the measure removes disincentives in current law so States will spend more of their own funds on programs designed to promote marriage.
- H.R. 4700 authorizes a \$20 million grant fund, as proposed by the President and included in the House Budget Resolution, to support community efforts to promote responsible fatherhood.

Encouraging Innovation by States:

- H.R. 4700 offers new authority to enable States to conduct "State Flex" demonstration projects to improve program effectiveness or coordinate a range of programs in order to improve service delivery. Eligible programs include TANF, Food Stamps, Public Housing, Workforce Investment Act, and Child Care, among others. This new flexibility will help States design fully coordinated programs that could revolutionize service delivery.

Weekly Quote

"Welfare's purpose should be to eliminate, as far as possible, the need for its own existence."

- Ronald Reagan
March 31, 1976

Wordsmith

self-re-li-ance

Pronunciation: -ri-'li-&nts

Function: noun

Date: 1833

: reliance on one's own efforts and abilities

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By the Numbers

- 4.2 mil. fewer individuals in poverty today than in 1996.
(Source: US Census Bureau)
- 2.3 mil. fewer children live in poverty today than in 1996.
(Source: US Census Bureau)
- 2 million fewer children are hungry today than at the time the welfare reform measures were first instituted
(Source: USDA)
- The number of welfare cases has been cut nearly in half since 1996.

Comments from the District

"I am most impressed with your keen insights and wisdom." - **Harvey Gilbert** - 5/6/02

"What are you doing to stop the erosion of COLAs and stop the run away increases in the FEHBP?" - **Michael Grossman** - 5/1/02

"I respectfully urge you to communicate to the Librarian of Congress that you and your fellow legislators, in passing the DMCA, did NOT intend for the royalty rate to be set so high (and reporting requirements so complex) that it would bankrupt the fledgling Internet radio industry." - **William Hamilton** - 5/1/02

"Thank you for defending our rights and liberties." - **Ryan Herche** - 5/1/02

You can view more comments on Congressman Pombo's web site bulletin board at the link here:

<http://www.house.gov/pombo/board/board2002/board2002.htm>