

Senate Anti-Poverty Agenda

Work

Investment

Neighborhoods



Empowering Families in Need

Senate Anti-Poverty Agenda:

(WIN) Work, Investment and Neighborhoods



Empowering Families in Need

The WIN Anti-Poverty Agenda reflects the proactive anti-poverty agenda of the Senate which embraces the critical role of work, investment, and neighborhood based solutions in the effort to empower families in need, create opportunity, and reduce poverty.

WIN

W O R K

We are committed to ensuring that work remains a gateway to opportunity for all Americans and seek to support effective partnerships promoting work for low-income Americans.

Welfare Reform Reauthorization

Since the 1996 law was enacted, welfare caseloads have been cut in more than half. More than seven million individuals, and two million families, have exchanged a welfare check for a paycheck. And despite opponents' dire predictions, the 1996 reforms have lifted 1.6 million children out of poverty. We must continue working to move the nearly two million families that remain on welfare into the workforce. Because of the unexpected success in caseload reduction, more than half of current welfare recipients are not engaged in any type of work activities at all. The next stage of welfare reform must focus more on helping families through strengthening work requirements while promoting the importance of marriage and fatherhood in reducing poverty and improving the well-being of children.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit/Welfare-to-Work expands and consolidates incentives for employers to hire low-income Americans. This measure would build on the success of welfare reform by providing these programs with greater stability, encouraging more employers to participate, making investments in expanding outreach to identify and train potential workers, and avoiding the uncertainty and inefficiency of termination and renewal.

The Family Opportunity Act

Currently, parents of severely disabled children who work lose Medicaid eligibility for their disabled children, if they have income and resources above the poverty level. This bill allows parents to go to work and earn above-poverty wages while maintaining health care for their disabled children by purchasing Medicaid. The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives legislation helped disabled adults go to work without losing health coverage.

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I N V E S T M E N T

Senators believe that active private-public partnerships can expand opportunity for low-income working families. These proposals seek to expand wealth creation and build assets for families through increased incentives for strategic savings, homeownership, and to help with the costs of raising children in loving families.

Individual Development Accounts (IDAs)

Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) have emerged as one of the most promising tools that enable low-income and low-wealth American families to save, build assets, and enter the financial mainstream. IDAs encourage ownership among low-income individuals by offering them matches for their own savings. IDAs reward the monthly savings of working-poor families who are trying to buy their first home, pay for post-secondary education, or start a small business. We will also continue to explore additional low-income savings incentives such as KIDS Accounts.



Low-Income Housing Assistance

In spite of overwhelming needs, very little new construction or substantial rehabilitation of single family homes occurs today in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods because, in too many cases, the cost of developing housing exceeds the market value of the property. Developers are not as likely to invest in any new housing development that may not be sold for the cost of construction. This is especially true in low- and moderate-income areas. The Community Development Homeownership Tax Credit bridges the gap between development costs and market value to enable the development of new or refurbished homes in these areas to blossom. We will also examine how Government Sponsored Enterprises' (GSEs) reforms will help low-income families' housing needs.

Marriage Penalty Relief and Child Tax Credit

Marriage penalty relief/child tax credit provisions would make permanent the increase in the basic standard deduction for a married couple to twice the basic standard deduction for an unmarried individual filing a single return. Additionally, for families and children, would the increase in the child tax credit from \$600 to \$1000 would be made permanent. Together, these provisions have already provided tax relief to millions of families, and recognizing that children living in married households are far less likely to live in poverty.

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N E I G H B O R H O O D S

Neighborhoods and communities should provide a positive influence for those in need. By increasing incentives for communities to be involved, and helping families in the country's most impoverished neighborhoods, we will take a significant step in restoring dreams, reducing poverty, and creating opportunity.

CARE Act/Charitable Giving

The Charity Aid, Recovery, and Empowerment Act (CARE Act) will encourage Americans to give more to charitable organizations so they can, through individual and corporate incentives, better assist those in need such as the hungry, the homeless, the addicted, the sick, at-risk children, and the elderly. The CARE Act is important unfinished business that passed both the House and the Senate last Congress.

Faith-Based as Full Partners

Builds on the success of Congress and the Administration through executive orders and regulations in preserving and protecting the ability of faith-based organizations to compete to deliver social services to those in need. We will maintain Charitable Choice protections for beneficiaries and faith-based organizations, support effective faith-based and community centers throughout the Executive Branch, and encourage similar efforts at the state and local level.

Hunger Relief

Hunger continues to be a very real problem for many American families living in poverty. Provisions in the CARE Act will provide incentives for an estimated \$2 billion worth of food donations from farmers, restaurants, and corporations to help those in need (America's Second Harvest estimates that this is the equivalent of 878 million meals for hungry Americans over 10 years). This is strongly supported by food banks, farm bureaus, and hunger advocacy groups around the country. In addition, the Hunger Relief Trucking Tax Credit Act will change the tax code to give transportation companies tax incentives for transferring gleaned food, helping to ensure that fresh fruits and vegetables that cannot be sold are made available to those in need.



Charitable Liability Reform

To build on the success of the Volunteer Protection Act, and the Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, we will expand reasonable liability protections of in-kind corporate contributions for transportation related use of vehicles and aircraft to charities. We will also consider in-kind contributions of equipment and facility use to non-profits, as well as other charitable liability proposals.

Commission on Expanding Social Service Delivery Options

The social service delivery commission created will undertake a thoughtful review of existing federal social service programs and make recommendations for program areas that would be appropriate for full or partial voucher options. The goal is to expand consumer choice and to minimize church-state concerns for integrated faith-based providers. Current social service program examples which empower the individual and families include the child care certificate program, Section 8 housing vouchers, and the Access to Recovery program for drug treatment services.

Prisoner Re-Entry / Mentoring Children

In 2002, two million people were incarcerated in Federal or State prisons or in local jails. Nearly 650,000 people are released from incarceration to communities nationwide each year. In recent years, a number of state and local governments have begun to establish improved systems for reintegrating former prisoners. Faith leaders and parishioners also have a long history of helping ex-offenders transform their lives. Through prison outreach in communities, churches and faith-based organizations have pioneered re-entry services to prisoners and their families. Successful reentry protects those who might otherwise be crime victims. We must support funding for faith-based and community organizations that provide mentoring services for children of prisoners.