

# Trump Wants Welfare in America Ended

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*During the Great Depression, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) provided financial help to children of low or no-income families.*

*The program later provided significant federal and state funding to needy families. Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty established the Office of Economic Opportunity, administering federal funds to aid impoverished Americans.*

It was part of his Great Society, expanding on FDR's New Deal, including establishment of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965 - essential programs, along with Social Security, targeted for elimination by cutting their benefits.

Social Security is weakened by way understating inflation, paying less to eligible recipients than they'd get otherwise.

During the neoliberal 90s, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation ("welfare reform") Act (PRWORA) changed eligibility rules - abolishing AFDC, the new program beginning on July 1, 1997.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) set five-year time limits. It gave states fixed block grants to administer at their discretion. Americas most needy are especially vulnerable during economic hard times when reduced federal aid exacerbates dire conditions.

Under TANF, recipients must work or receive job training, even during hard times when employment is hard to find.

Single mothers with young children are greatly harmed. During their early formative years, children need extra parental care. TANF recipients are required to find jobs with 24 months of receiving aid.

From 1970 to 1996, financial aid for poor families with children fell by over 40% in two-thirds of the states, adjusted for inflation.

As of July 2017, TANF benefits for impoverished families of three with no other support is 60% of poverty-level income – extreme deprivation for affected households.

In 2015, less than 25% of poor families with children received TANF aid – compared to over two-thirds of eligible households in 1997. In 14 states, only around 10% of impoverished families got TANF benefits.

The 2009 Recovery Act included TANF Emergency Fund aid. In September 2010, it wasn't renewed. Budget-strapped states continue force-feeding harsh cuts, vulnerable residents harmed most.

In 2015, a book by Johns Hopkins sociologist Kathryn Edin and Univ. of Michigan's Poverty Solutions director Luke Shaefer, titled "\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America" was stunning.

It reported this level of extreme poverty affects about 1.5 million US households with 2.8 million children – surviving on practically nothing. It's hard to imagine.

The Clinton co-presidency promised to "end welfare as we know it." Trump intends doing him one better, wanting sharp TANF cuts, deplorably saying "people are taking advantage of the system" – no evidence proving it, according to Edin.

He intends pushing for greater welfare cutbacks once tax cuts for corporate predators and super-rich Americans are enacted into law – provided House and Senate members agree on so-called tax reform, likely but not certain, plenty of opposition flack to deal with, whether enough to kill it remains to be seen.

Likely early next year, details on Trump's welfare cuts will be announced. According to his Domestic Policy Council director Paul Winfree, he and another staffer are "working on a major welfare reform program."

Their proposal will be included in a 2018 Trump executive order, outlining administration principles, directing federal agencies to draft recommendations for federal legislation.

Congressional leaders were told this is coming next year. According to Edin, TANF greatly reduced aid to needy families. It never became a "springboard to work."

Welfare benefits already are minimal, way below what's needed. Further cuts will cause more harm than already to America's most vulnerable.

Trump's initial 2018 budget proposal, revealed last March, sought cuts in Medicaid, food stamps, Pell grants for students and other programs.

His ultimate aim, along with GOP hardliners, is eliminating social justice in America altogether – wanting more of the nation's resources available for its privileged class, militarism and warmaking.

The country already is unsafe and unfit to live in. A few more years of Trumpism and GOP extremism will make it impossible except for the privileged few.

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My newest book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: How the US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

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