WORKFARE AND
THE FAMILY SUPPORT ACT OF 1988

by

VIJAY VYTHIANATHAN VAITHEESWARAN

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ABSTRACT

The history of work requirements placed on welfare recipients was examined. In particular, the background behind "W"orkfare- a specific type of work program requiring community service in return for welfare grants- was explored. "W"orkfare was contrasted with "w"orkfare, which is a broad view of welfare focusing on employability rather than employment at all costs, and which relies heavily on expanded benefits such as child care, health insurance, and educational programs.

The importance of these two approaches in the welfare reform process of the 1980's was examined. The major outcome of the debate, the Family Support Act of 1988, was evaluated based on results from studies of recent state-run experiments in work-related welfare programs.

Based on these studies and the history of welfare work programs, the Family Support Act of 1988 has a better chance of success than its predecessors because the particularly lengthy partisan struggles that threatened to destroy it resulted in a workable compromise- the Republicans accepted important new benefits that are vital to freeing the recipient to work, and the Democrats accepted stricter, but not unrealistic, participation rate targets that are likely to make this act more successful than its more lenient predecessors.

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Harvey Sapolsky

Title: Professor of Political Science
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1. PREFACE: WORKFARE DEFINED

"Workfare is a dirty word around here!"1 These words uttered by Dawn Homer Bouthiette, a Planning Analyst for Connecticut's Department of Income Maintainence, represent one of a myriad of reactions to Workfare. The term Workfare often stirs up strong emotions- from blind devotion to vehement opposition- among those concerned about welfare reform. A major obstacle to understanding the issue is the great confusion over exactly what "Workfare" is.

Although many shades of interpretation are possible, basically there are two meanings for "workfare" as used in this report. Workfare, with a big "W", represents a specific type of program in which able-bodied welfare recipients are required to work in government-sponsored community service jobs in return for grants.

In sharp contrast, workfare, with a little "w", represents a broader approach to the problem of supporting the nation's poor. The new workfare represents a major shift from the "New Deal" philosophy of welfare as a cash benefits program. Instead, workfare emphasizes the desirability of getting the welfare recipient into the work force- whether in the private or public sector- for the benefit of both the individual and society. The individual benefits, it is argued, because by "working off" one's welfare checks, one can maintain self-respect as well as learning new skills and work habits that enhance future

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1 Interview with Dawn Homer Bouthiette, DIM Planning Analyst, 18 July 1989
employability, thereby helping to break the poverty cycle. A key element of the new proposals is the inclusion of increased support services such as child care and health insurance.

Society also benefits from workfare, argue supporters, because not only are there more skilled workers, but also because welfare cheats are forced to stop leeching off the system. This not only saves money, but it is also likely to increase support for welfare programs from the public, which has always been wary of supporting "freeloaders."
2. BACKGROUND ON WORK/ WELFARE PROGRAMS

Work-related programs for recipients of public assistance have received considerable attention in the past few years. Much of the recent discussion has focused on the Family Support Act of 1988. The roots of this legislation are traced directly to legislation enacted in 1981 and 1982, when many states implemented programs to help welfare recipients attain the skills they need to be self-sufficient. These programs were introduced as a complement to existing welfare programs such as AFDC- Aid to Families with Dependant Children.

The basic philosophy regarding work requirements for participants in public welfare programs has changed much during the history of these programs. When AFDC- the largest program providing cash assistance to low-income families with children- was created half a century ago, recipients were not required or expected to work.

2.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE AFDC PROGRAM

The AFDC program was established by Title IV of the Social Security Act of 1935. This act was part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's sweeping package of benefits programs- The New Deal- designed to help Americans recover from the Great Depression. It authorized matching grants to states to help them provide cash assistance to needy children who had lost a parent.
In its current form, AFDC is less centralized than it was at its inception. Legislative changes enacted in 1961 allowed each state to determine its own program eligibility criteria and benefit levels, subject to certain federal requirements. In general, AFDC benefits are available to single-parent families with children under 18 and income below a specified amount.

Since 1961, states have also been allowed to provide benefits to families which have both parents, as long as the principal breadwinner is unemployed. About half of the states have taken up this option, known as AFDC-UP. AFDC-UP families make up less than ten percent of all welfare families.

Able-bodied recipients age 16 and over are required to register for work and training in their state's Work Incentive Program (WIN). Adults who care for children six and under, and children in secondary school, are exempt. If recipients refuse to register for, or to participate in, a work assignment, they will lose some or all of their benefits.

Each state calculates an individual standard of need and sets what percentage of this need will be met by AFDC funds; the remaining need is met by other programs such as Food Stamps and Medicare. Family size and the amount of other income are the primary factors determining the benefit level for a family. For example, for a one-parent family of three in January 1987, the median state had a need standard of $428, and a maximum AFDC grant of $354.
AFDC benefits totaled approximately $15.8 billion in fiscal year 1986, of which the federal share was $8.5 billion. Federal funding averaged 54% of total AFDC spending for the nation as a whole. The cost of administering the program was $2 billion in 1986-12.7% of the entire budget- and the federal government paid 50% of that cost.

Overall, eight major welfare programs accounted for more than two-thirds of estimated total welfare spending. Federal-state-local spending totaled $101.7 billion in FY85 on these major areas:

1) Supplemental Security Income (SSI): cash for needy aged and disabled persons. The federal government sets eligibility standards and provides funding, which is supplemented by half the states.

2) Food Stamps: food stamps for virtually all persons in needy households, regardless of age or family structure.

3) AFDC: cash for needy children and their caretakers whose fathers are absent or, in 24 states and DC and Guam, unemployed. Today only 2% of AFDC children are paternal orphans; 87% have an able-bodied father, but he lives away from home.

2 CBO Report, "Work-Related Programs for Welfare Recipients"
4) Medicaid: free medical care for AFDC recipients, for SSI recipients in 35 states.

5) Veteran's Pensions: cash for needy veterans who are aged or disabled by a condition unrelated to their military service.

6) and 7) Public housing and lower income housing assistance: subsidized rent for families, the elderly and the handicapped.

8) General Assistance: cash and in-kind aid for needy persons as determined by states and counties. No federal money finances this program.

2.2 A CLOSER LOOK AT AFDC RECIPIENTS

During 1986, the average monthly caseload was 11 million individuals, in 3.7 million families. Two-thirds of these recipients were children, while the rest were their mothers or other caretaker relatives. In almost all of the cases (AFDC-UP cases not included), the father was absent from the family. The average monthly payments were $120 per person, or $352 per family.

The typical case, according to AFDC administrative records in 1985, was a mother in her twenties, with one or two children. About 60 percent of the welfare mothers had at least one child under the age of six, and 70 percent of the mothers were exempt from WIN registration because they were caring for young children.
According to the data, despite the large numbers of families who move onto and off AFDC each year, the number of families receiving AFDC support in the last decade has remained fairly constant. The two types of cases tend to be the temporary families, who stay on welfare for a few months to "catch their breath," and the hardcore, long-term unemployed. As the data in Table 1 shows, of the 3.3 million recipients in fiscal year 1985, about 30 percent had been receiving AFDC for less than one year. Another 30 percent had been on AFDC help for one to three years, and the remaining 40 percent had been receiving benefits for over three years.³

³ CBO Report, "Work-Related Programs for Welfare Recipients"
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Months since case was opened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 or Fewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. # AFDC Mothers</td>
<td>3,310</td>
<td>990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- thousands</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 - 30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 30 Youngest Child's Age</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 3</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5 Number of Children</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- One</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Two</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Three</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Four +</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CBO, "Work-Related Programs for Welfare Recipients"
One limitation of these official data is that they take into account only periods of welfare dependency that are current—no cases that ended sometime in the past are counted. As a result, the 40 percent figure of recipients who have been on welfare for more than three years represents a gross underestimate of the true hardcore welfare dependant population. Data from the Panel Study on Income Dynamics (PSID), a nationwide survey of 5000 AFDC households from 1968 through 1982 conducted by the Mathematica Policy Research Corporation, indicate that one half of all AFDC mothers receive benefits for at least five years and one quarter do so for over nine years. This latter group, which receives payments for so many years, accounts for the majority of the women receiving AFDC at any given point in time and is the most expensive group to support. Analysis of this data done by David Ellwood, author of the study, also suggests that certain factors are common among long-term AFDC recipients: women who were young, who had children, who were single when they started receiving benefits, or who had not worked recently before going on welfare were likely to be long-term recipients.

2.3 RACE AND WELFARE

The welfare rolls contain a disproportionate number of blacks and Hispanics—approximately 45% of welfare expenditures in FY86 went to these minority groups. One major reason for this is that black nonhispanics and Hispanics tend to have poverty rates that are much higher than those of white nonhispanics. In 1987, 32.9% of nonhispanic
blacks and 28.2% of Hispanics were poor. This compares to fewer than 1 in 10 (9.1 percent) of nonhispanic whites who were poor.

Although Hispanics and nonhispanic blacks represent a minority of the total US population, their numbers among the poor are approaching the numbers of poor white nonhispansics, who account for a slight majority of the poor population (in 1987, 54.1%). In 1987, nonhispanic blacks represented 12% of the population, but 29% of the poor population. Hispanics represented 8% of the population, but nearly 17% of the poor population.

For Hispanics, major factors contributing to their high poverty rate- and, thus, welfare dependence- are low levels of schooling, poor English skills, and larger families. For nonhispanic blacks, obstacles to overcoming poverty are low levels of schooling and a large proportion of children who live in single female-headed families.4

2.4 CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARD WORK AND WELFARE

The guiding philosophy regarding work requirements in welfare programs has changed much in the past few decades. When the Social Security Act was signed into law in 1935, it contained no provision requiring work of welfare recipients. In fact, a basic premise of the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) Act, the precursor to the AFDC Act, was that the well-being of dependant children in homes with absent

4CRS Report, "Progress Against Poverty, 1959-1987"
fathers was contingent upon the mother being able to stay at home. As
the Committee on Economic Security reported to President Roosevelt in
1935, the ADC benefits were meant

...to release from the wage-earning role the person whose
natural function is to give her children the physical and
affectionate guardianship necessary not alone to keep them
from falling into social misfortune, but more affirmatively
to rear them into citizens capable of contributing to
society.\(^5\)

Thirty years later, however, Congress established the Work
Incentive Program with the goal of giving welfare recipients

... a sense of dignity, self-worth, and confidence which will
flow from being recognized as a wage-earning member of
society and ...[with the belief that] the example of a
working adult in these families will have beneficial effects
on the children in such families.\(^6\)

Several factors help to explain this change in attitude. One factor
was the amendment of the AFDC statutes in 1961, an option later known
as AFDC-UP, which allowed states to give benefits to two-parent
families whose main earning member was out of work. This change
was important because the fathers new to welfare, unlike the mothers
already on welfare, were expected to get back to work in the near

\(^5\)CBO Report, "Work-Related Programs for Welfare Recipients"
\(^6\)CBO Report, "Work-Related Programs for Welfare Recipients"
future. This change led welfare planners to think about helping recipients get the skills needed for the workforce.

Another factor was the very rapid growth, both in the number of cases and in the cost of the program, of the AFDC program. Between 1960 and 1970, for example, the number of families receiving help nearly tripled from 800,000 to 2.2 million. The total cost of the program increased from $1 billion to $5 billion during the same timeframe, reflecting increases in both the number of recipients and the average value of benefits per family. With such enormous increases in costs, there was great pressure on legislators and program administrators to get people into the workforce and off welfare.

One other factor—probably the most important factor—was the major shift in American society's attitude toward the role of women at home and in the workplace. In the 1930's, the woman's role was, without question, in the home raising the children. By the 1960's, however, this was no longer the case, especially for mothers of school-age children. For example, in 1948 only 37 percent of married women with children under 17 worked outside the home. By 1965, the number of working women had risen to 66 percent of all women. In 1985, two-thirds of all mothers with children under 18 worked sometime during the year, with about half of these women working full-time year-round.

This significant social trend affected welfare work requirements in two ways. First, mothers who were just above the benefits threshold and who were working to support their family—along with many other
observers- voiced protests at the thought of welfare mothers receiving a "free ride." Also, the increased numbers of women in the workforce led welfare thinkers to consider work as a legitimate means of improving the standard of living of at least some welfare recipients.

2.5 GOALS OF WELFARE PROGRAMS WITH WORK REQUIREMENTS

Advocates of the shift in focus of welfare programs toward work point to the following goals:7

• Raising the living standards of recipients.
• Reducing the cost of welfare programs.
• Bringing welfare in line with prevailing societal values by requiring recipients to actively contribute to society by working.
• Increasing the long-term employability of recipients.
• Gaining the psychological support of the public, which is always wary of "freeloaders," for welfare spending.

7MDRC, "Reforming Welfare with Work"
3. A HISTORY OF WORKFARE

During the last three decades, the federal government has sponsored a number of programs designed to help AFDC participants with training, work experience, and job placement. These programs have generally fallen into one of two categories: (1) programs designed for low-income people, many of whom are also recipients of welfare aid, and (2) programs designed specifically for welfare recipients, in which participation may be a requirement.

These programs have shared the goals of raising the standard of living of their participants and reducing the cost of welfare. Another common thread among these programs has been their intergovernmental nature, for the federal government has relied heavily on state and local governments in administering and funding these initiatives.

The Department of Labor has been the main federal agency responsible for the work programs aimed at all low-income people. The Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962 set up the first major federal job training program. In 1973, it was replaced by the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, which in turn was replaced by the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982. In all of these programs, participation has been voluntary.

The Department of Health and Human Services, alone and in conjunction with the Department of Labor, has introduced work programs aimed specifically at welfare recipients. The Work Incentive

3.1 WORKFARE

The concept of Workfare—mandatory community service in exchange for benefits—is by no means new. Similar initiatives have been proposed and even implemented on a small scale from the Depression Era onwards in the US. However, rarely have these proposals ever received the national attention or stimulated debate the way that the Workfare component of the Family Support Act of 1988 has.

The roots of public service employment lie in the Great Depression, when the creation and subsidization of public sector jobs were seen as acceptable ways to help ease unemployment and stimulate the economy. The WPA was successful in providing useful work as well as "priming the pump" for the economy.

Following World War II, such public sector employment programs became unpopular. It was not until the 1960's, when problems of poverty, unemployment and economic dislocation once again loomed large on the nation's agenda was public sector employment considered.
Of all the manpower programs developed in the 1960's, several were primarily public employment programs. The Neighborhood Youth Corps was one such program, for it provided disadvantaged youth with part-time and full-time subsidized public sector jobs. These jobs were offered during the summer to help youths earn money for school and to give them job experience.8

Another Workfare-type program developed during the 1960's was Operation Mainstream, which was authorized by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. This program provided subsidized community service jobs for the chronically unemployed, particularly older citizens and those in rural areas. The federal government paid 90% of the cost to train such chronically unemployed adults and to place them. One of the more successful programs operated under Operation Mainstream was Green Thumb, which was run by the Farmers' Union for older rural workers.

These manpower initiatives developed in the 1960's represented, as the National Planning Association noted, "more or less tentative ventures into the public employment arena."9 As such, they were not well-funded and were phased out without having much tremendous success.

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8 CRS Report, "Progress Against Poverty, 1959-1987"
9 NPA, "PSE: Effective Manpower Strategy"
In addition to these specific public sector employment programs, two other major welfare programs were developed that had public sector employment as a major component, at least in theory. The first of these programs was the Public Employment Program (PEP), which was established under the Emergency Employment Act of 1971.10

Although begun with much fanfare, PEP met with limited success for two reasons. First of all, political compromises had placed several, often conflicting, goals for PEP. These goals included changing the hiring practices of state and local governments and the elimination of discrimination.

The second reason the program failed to achieve its full potential was the strong emphasis placed on the transitional nature of PEP. The program was designed as a "stop-gap" measure to alleviate the very high unemployment rate in 1971, and was designed to run out in two years. Such short term planning adversely affected the funding and commitment of states to the program.

In December, 1973, Congress passed sweeping legislation reforming most of the manpower policies in the US. The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) seemed very promising, advocates of Workfare-type programs thought, for it created a separate title which called for a public service employment program to replace PEP. However, unlike PEP, which was national in scope, this

10Foy, Mary. *History of Employment Security in West Virginia*
program was limited to local areas where unemployment had reached 6.5% or more for three consecutive months. Furthermore, this program carried with it secondary goals similar to the ones that had weighed down PEP\textsuperscript{11}.

Over the past 15 years, CETA has achieved only limited success in its public service programs. CETA did achieve some modest income gains, a Congressional Budget Office/ National Commission for Employment Policy joint study noted, but the gains were small and were limited to certain select groups.\textsuperscript{12} Indeed, some criticize the entire program, in which $60 billion was spent between 1973 and 1984, as "...a local boondoggle of failed expectations..." for failing to deliver significant results \textsuperscript{13}

Thus, workfare has been part of the national debate on welfare since the Great Depression. However, workfare programs implemented in the post-war era have not achieved great success because they have been plagued by tentative commitment of resources and conflicting administrative goals.

\textsuperscript{11}WSJ, "Go Slow on Welfare Reform," 18 March 1987
\textsuperscript{13}WSJ, "Go Slow on Welfare Reform," 18 March 1987
4. EVALUATING WORK/WELFARE EXPERIMENTS

Evaluating the potential effects of work-related welfare programs is extremely difficult because of the uncertainty concerning what would have happened if the programs had never been implemented. One cause of such uncertainty is the difficulty in isolating the cause of the mobility from unemployment to work for a particular group. For example, identifying training programs as the reason women left the welfare rolls for work may be inaccurate because, as recent studies suggest, many women would have left welfare for work even without job-assistance programs. Thus, estimating the success of a program in increasing earnings and reducing welfare costs is impossible without also considering the earnings and costs of welfare for participants had they not participated in the work program.

One technique used to evaluate the success of work/welfare programs uses statistical tools to forecast what would have happened to a group based on their past record, their innate characteristics, and the behavior of similar people not in the program. The chief drawback to this method is known as "selection bias"- this method cannot measure intangible quantities, such as personal motivation, that could systematically distinguish participants from those who did not apply to, or were not accepted to, the work program.

The alternative is to run an experiment in which people eligible to participate in a program are randomly assigned either to the program or to a control group that does not participate in the program.
Although this method is recognized as better than the statistical method, in particular because statistical bias is not an issue with this method, it does have some problems. This method is difficult and expensive to carry out and has not been widely used as a result.

Three more serious problems remain, however, even with the method of random assignment. The first problem concerns inferring effects after the test has been completed. This is a significant problem, for while the program costs may be very high at the beginning of a program, benefits could continue for many years. Thus, a study lasting a few years could understate the effects of a particular program by not providing enough information for reasonable inferences about the future.

The second problem is that it is very difficult to extend the results obtained at a small-scale test or at a small number of sites to a nationwide level. The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), which has carried out many random assignment experiments at a number of sites, is always very careful to mention that its results are applicable only for the specific conditions of the case—generally with a small number of participants at few sites.

The third problem is lack of information about the "displacement" effects of the programs. This problem is more difficult to solve, for it does not affect the participants themselves. "Displacement" occurs when a successful work program graduate is placed in a job that would otherwise have gone to a non-welfare
recipient. If, as a result of this displacement, the non-recipient is forced onto the welfare rolls, the effects of the work program are far less positive than might be thought.14

14 CBO Report, "Work-Related Programs for Welfare Recipients"
5. RECENT STATE-RUN WORK/ WELFARE PROGRAMS

Studies of recent state-run welfare initiatives involving work provide an important perspective in the evaluation of workfare proposals. These initiatives- CETA, WIN, and more recent WIN Demonstrations- while having significant differences from the recent workfare proposals- did provide important empirical data for the discussions on Capitol Hill and elsewhere.

The most important finding from years of studies is that work-related programs have consistently improved the participants' average earnings, especially if the participants lacked work experience. The studies have also shown that these programs do save the government some money through reduced Medicare, AFDC, and other benefit program outlays. However, whether these programs have saved enough money to offset the costs incurred cannot be conclusively determined because such long-term data is unavailable for the most part. One exception to this is the recently released MDRC study of Ohio's work program, which showed significant savings after five years of operation.

Another important observation to be drawn from the studies is that few states have chosen to require large percentages of recipients to participate in work activities. A recent GAO study found that most states have not used the authority given to them to impose work-related obligations, particularly workfare, on a large portion of their AFDC caseload. Instead, these states have chosen to focus on job search
assistance. Critics, most notably Lawrence Mead of New York University, point to this laxness as a major hindrance to the success of work programs.\textsuperscript{15}

5.1 COMPREHENSIVE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACT

Most evaluations of CETA training programs found statistically significant gains in earnings for female participants, particularly if they had little work experience. The average annual income gains for women after one year of participation ranged from $800 to $2000 in 1985 dollars. Males in the program experienced no income gain.

A joint study by the Congressional Budget Office and the National Commission for Employment Policy which examined the effects of the work programs on a sample of CETA recipients from January 1975 to June 1976 provided positive results. The study showed that in that period, the average earnings of women increased by $1700 annually, to a level 40 percent above that of their salary before training. 80 percent of this gain was attributed to increases in the number of hours worked as a result of the women's higher skill level, and 20 percent was attributed to higher salaries. This study also found that gains continued for at least the first three years of the program. Men in this study, however, experienced gains that were statistically insignificant.

\textsuperscript{15}Mead, Lawrence, Interview
5.2 WORK INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Studies done on AFDC participants during the 1970's also suggest that work programs like WIN increase the incomes of recipients, especially females with little work experience. One major study by Kertron, Inc., for example, estimated that women in WIN earned approximately $600 more annually than other women on AFDC. (See Table 2.) These gains were sustained for two years, but became statistically insignificant the third year. For women with no work experience, however, the average gains were much higher and they continued into the third year.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{16}CBO Report, "Work-Related Programs for Welfare Recipients"
### TABLE 2

**ESTIMATED EFFECTS ON THE ANNUAL EARNINGS OF AFDC RECIPIENTS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE WIN PROGRAM** (in 1985 dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years after WIN entry</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Annual Earnings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No prior jobs</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prior job</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All women</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No prior jobs</td>
<td>2420</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>-1180</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior job</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>-280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All men</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>-370</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** CBO Report, "Work-Related Programs for Welfare Recipients"
5.3 RECENT WIN-DEMONSTRATION STUDIES

Studies done after three years of experimentation with work programs in Arkansas, Maine, Virginia, and Maryland by MDRC showed that the programs increased the long-term earnings of welfare recipients and saved the states money, usually in five years or less. Dr. Judith Gueron, director of the MDRC studies, stated, "We've known for some time that these programs increase employment and earnings in the short term. We now know that these results continue for at least three years." She added that "...these findings are striking because...they show consistently positive outcomes across a wide range of environments."17

17 MDRC, "Findings on State Welfare Employment Programs," January 1987
6. THE FAMILY SUPPORT ACT OF 1988

Welfare reform has always been a popular subject on Capitol Hill, but invariably, efforts to change the existing system got bogged down in partisan and ideological politics. The recently passed Family Support Act of 1988 began as the third major effort in the last twenty years to revamp the welfare system. The two previous efforts failed to overcome the same philosophical differences that threatened the Family Support Act of 1988 at every turn.

However, several significant events helped to make this attempt at welfare reform successful. First of all, proponents of reform were greatly helped by President Reagan's promise in his State of the Union address in 1986 to make welfare reform a top issue. Another positive sign was the elevation of New York Senator D. Patrick Moynihan, long a proponent of welfare reform, to a subcommittee chairmanship from which he could exert much influence.18

True to his word, President Reagan developed several initiatives early in 1987 aimed at reforming the welfare system. The most significant of these was Greater Opportunities Through Work, or GROW, which was designed to replace the Work INcentive (WIN) program. Under GROW, a percentage of recipients would be required to participate in work or education, as opposed to simply registering and not necessarily participating, as WIN required. States would have

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18 CQ Weekly Report, 1 October 1988
their federal welfare dollars cut if they did not meet quotas. This required rate of participation would rise to 60% of the case load by 1992, and for youths 16 or older the required rates would be 90%. GROW would also require mothers with children over six months- not six years as in WIN- to participate with half the cost of child care to be provided. 

The Administration introduced this proposal as a part of the Department of Health and Human Services budget for Fiscal Year 1988, proposing $110 million, far less than the $210 million spent on WIN in Fiscal Year 1986. Later in the same year, on March 31, 1987, Representative John Rowland introduced the GROW bill (HR 1880) to the House Ways and Means committee at Reagan's request.

The President's plan appeared about the same time that the nation's governors gave their overwhelming support for a national welfare policy that would require able recipients to work and would provide them with increased child care, health care and transportation services. The governors' plan would have required work or education for parents of children three or older. It also called for a national standard of need, which would provide a minimum level of benefit, a departure from the existing system of locally set levels of need. The governors' association estimated this program would cost $1 billion in

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19 GROW Summary, Congressman John Rowland's Office
its first year— with 85% of that federal money— but would save money in the long run as recipients became productive workers.

Participants at the National Governors' Association winter meeting in February 1987 supported a policy statement that they aim "...to turn what is now primarily a payments system with a minor work component into a system that is first and foremost a jobs system, backed up by an income-assistance component."21

The nation's governors have been "very strong advocates" of the WIN program, which finances state-designed projects, according to Governor Michael Castle (R, Del). Governor Bill Clinton (D, Ark), the association's chairman, added that more welfare experimentation was unnecessary. "We know enough now to know," he said.22

The leaders of the Governors' Association took their proposal to confront President Reagan and his GROW proposal. When they left the White House on February 25, 1987, they were pleasantly surprised to have reached an accord on many points. While they disagreed on the price tag and on the issue of nationally set minimum level for benefits, they agreed on the need for a fundamental change towards workfare. Many legislators also agreed, and as the Wall Street Journal pointed out, "the degree of consensus forming around welfare reform is unusual. All the important players— the president, the governors, and

congressional leaders—agree...on the ultimate goal of welfare reform."23

Thus, the stage was set by spring 1987 for Congress to consider legislation. By June, Senator Moynihan and Senator Lloyd Bentsen (D, TX), chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, had succeeded in getting a $2.8 billion plan for welfare reform through the Senate. In order to gain White House and Republican support, however, they had to accept Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole's amendment for work and participation requirements.

These restrictions, which included a component of Workfare—the mandatory community service proposal—displeased many Democrats and many of the governors, who "...would have had to pony up significant state funds" to meet the new requirements.24

In the House, the going was much rougher. Representative Rowland's GROW bill, introduced at Reagan's request, was eclipsed by the proposal put forward by Henry Brown (R, AZ), a senior member of the Ways and Means Committee. Rowland's bill had a strong Workfare requirement, while Brown's bill was less stringent with the penalties and the required participation rates. Hugh Marthison, Legislative Director for John Rowland, feels that Brown's seniority and influence as a member of the Ways and Means Committee—not necessarily the lower Workfare component—were key factors in pushing Rowland's GROW to

23 WSJ, "Towards a Welfare Consensus," 27 February 1987
24 CQ Weekly Report, 1 October 1988
the right of the spectrum. Dr. Ron Haskins, advisor to Henry Brown on the bill, disagrees. He also insists that Brown's bill was no less supportive of the concept of Workfare. In the end, it was Brown's version, HR 1720, that was approved by the Ways and Means Committee on June 10, 1987.

However, the House Education and Labor Committee, which also has jurisdiction in this area, passed an amended version of HR 1720 on June 15, 1987, which contained no Workfare provisions. The Education and Labor Committee also demanded more benefits and a different administration set up from the one called for in the Ways and Means version. After months of haggling, the House finally reached an agreement on December 12, 1987. The Family Welfare Reform Act of 1987, which passed 230-194, was a compromise that gave over $7 billion in expanded benefits and meager Workfare requirements.

The battle lines were drawn, with the Senate proposal- which had White House support- on one side and the House proposal- which had important liberal support- on the other. The House-Senate Conference Committee began meeting in January to iron out a compromise, but ran into many difficulties. One of the main sticking points was the insistence of conservatives on Workfare and the equally adamant refusal of it by liberals. The Workfare clause appeased conservatives who, as the New York Times described, "...still viewed some welfare recipients

25 Interview with Hugh Marthison, Legislative Director for Congressman Rowland, 30 June 1989
26 Interview with Dr. Ron Haskins, Advisor to House Ways and Means Committee, 6 July 1989
as Cadillac-driving 'welfare queens.'”27 Liberals, led by Representative Augustus Hawkins, California Democrat and Chairman of the Education and Labor Committee, argued that Workfare was really "slavefare", forcing people to work in undesirable jobs which often provide no training and do not enhance future employability.

The White House insisted on the mandatory work program, and some house conferees seemed willing, by May, 1988, to yield- if they received increased welfare benefits and fewer restrictions on eligibility. Representative Thomas Downey, Democrat of New York and leader of the House conferees, even proposed a compromise in which the mandatory work program would not be implemented until 1994. Even with the delay, however, the majority of the 40 House conferees refused to accept Workfare.

Also contributing to the months of delay was the absence of some major players. Senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas, chairman of the Senate conferees, had been preoccupied with his Vice Presidential campaign. Another heavyweight, Representative Dan Rostenkowski, Illinois Democrat and chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, had been "...generally aloof from the meetings."28

By September, after countless more hours of negotiating, the conferees seemed no closer to reaching an accord. Once again, the main

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issue was the work provision. President Reagan was willing to accept the benefit increases in the bill as long as the Workfare provision was retained. House liberals would not bow, however. Representative Hawkins stuck to his vehement opposition of the required Workfare-"There's not much room for compromise."29 Even Senator Moynihan, not now widely regarded as a conservative, proclaimed, "...the liberal mindset is now our principal obstacle."30

Finally, after nine months of frustration, the conference reached a compromise. On September 27, 1988, the House-Senate Conference Committee approved HR 1720 by a vote of 35 to 8. Within three days, the full Senate and House passed the measure and sent it on to President Reagan, who signed the Family Support Act of 1988 into law.

The final compromise gave both liberals and conservatives what they wanted the most- but made both sides accept some undesirable aspects.. Conservatives got workfare in the provision requiring states to enroll set percentages of recipients in the JOBS program. They got Workfare in the form of a stipulation that one parent in two-parent welfare families (called AFDC-UP families) perform at least 16 hours per week of unpaid community service work. They had to accept a provision that only a maximum of 20 percent of the AFDC-UP caseload be required to participate, and that too only by 1994.

29 NYT, "Conferees say Bill to Revise Welfare is in Trouble," 18 September 1988
30 NYT, "Conferees say Bill to Revise Welfare is in Trouble," 18 September 1988
Liberals gained some important benefit increases, and a total $3.34 billion price tag. This included a new requirement that states offer benefits to two-parent families and a $1 billion per year entitlement for state education and a full year of extended child care and medical benefits for recipients who leave welfare for jobs. In fact, many observers felt that it was these transition benefits that marked the turning point for many liberals. As Representative George Miller (D, Cal), who earlier said he would rather wait for the next administration than support this bill, remarked, a full year provision "gives former recipients a real incentive to take the risk to leave the rolls- and it's a big risk."31

For some House Democrats, led by Hawkins, the final bill was still unacceptable. As Representative Robert Matsui (D, Cal) said, "I just don't think this is the kind of bill Democrats should be supporting." However, most members of both houses were very pleased with the outcome and gave much of the credit to Pat Moynihan, who, in the words of Senator David Pryor (D, Ark), "has literally raised this issue from the dead." Senator Bob Packwood (R, Ore) summed up: "There's no guarantee that this bill will resolve the crisis facing our welfare system. But there's one certainty, and that 's that the present system does not work and cannot work. And but for Pat Moynihan, we would not be trying to fix it at all."32

31 CQ Weekly Report, 1 October 1988
32 CQ Weekly Report, 1 October 1988
Thus, through- or perhaps despite- the efforts of activist governors, a staunch president, a squabbling Congress, and an indefatigable Senator from New York, America took a major step towards workfare, with a little Workfare thrown in.
7. EVALUATION OF WORKFARE

Much has been written in the past few years- especially as the controversy over the Family Support Act of 1988 heated up- about Workfare. In order to intelligently evaluate the programs and philosophies behind Workfare, one needs clearly defined terms.

Pure, unadulterated Workfare- which is mandatory community service in return for grants, with no extra benefits or private sector involvement- has been only a paper tiger in the US, for rarely is it implemented in isolation. Rather, historically- and in the current Family Support Act of 1988- Workfare is but a part of a greater scheme including job search in the private sector, remedial and technical education, and job training.

The reason for this is that very few, including staunch supporters of Workfare, believe that standing alone it can replace the current welfare program. The idea of Workfare is very appealing, even vocal critics such as U C Berkeley's Joanna Weinberg admit, for "Workfare (has become) the current embodiment of the American work ethic. 'Good citizens' will find jobs, and the 'undeserving' will be punished." But, Weinberg goes on, the low quality of the work required and the subsistence wages paid undermine efforts to raise the poor out of the poverty trap. With Workfare, she points out, "...we may have very
clean streets and plenty of all-beef patties, but we will not have permanently employed workers.33

Another concern critics often voice is more pragmatic—why do we even need Workfare? There are plenty of jobs available in the private sector, these critics point out, and employers often go short-handed. Why then should the government create public sector jobs? In this context, the Wall Street Journal noted, "Workfare seems like a halfway house for welfare recipients on their journey to the real economy."34

Thus, few political thinkers would like to see a pure form of Workfare implemented alone. In fact, a recent General Accounting Office field study showed that over 85% of the state WIN programs granted permission to require strict work provisions chose not to do so.35 The roots of this may lie in partisan preconceptions about the ultimate goal of Workfare. As Larry Mead, Associate Professor of Politics at New York University, observed, liberals are prone "...to turn Workfare into just another voluntary training program that offers new benefits to clients without seriously expecting work from them" while conservatives stress a stricter version that "...will deter the employable from going on welfare at all."36

33 NYT, "Workfare- It Isn't Work, It Isn't Fair," 19 August 1988
Another issue that often arises on any analysis of Workfare is the marriage of support services to Workfare requirements. Such a marriage was the centerpiece of the Family Support Act of 1988, which called for extensive child care, health insurance and transportation service to be provided for all work program participants. This integrated approach to Workfare—which some call workfare—satisfied many politicians, who accepted the compromises of the Family Support Act of 1988.

Some pundits remain unchanged, however. Liberals such as Weinberg bemoan the "tentative commitment to services" of the workfare compromises and refuse to accept the bait. On the other side of the spectrum, conservatives complain that increases in social services are not fully justifiable and that "Workfare should not be held hostage to day care..."37

Since it is so difficult to assess the success of Workfare in isolation, the next logical step is to assess how successful programs involving Workfare tied to expanded services and job search programs—workfare—have been. Reports from a variety of sources indicate that such workfare programs have been, at the least, moderately successful, and possibly greatly so. The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), a New York-based nonpartisan research group that has come to be regarded on Capitol Hill and elsewhere as by far the

most reliable source of information on work-related welfare programs, has done much work in this area.

Studies were done after three years of experimentation with work programs in Arkansas, Maine, Virginia, and Maryland by MDRC and they showed that the programs increased the long-term earnings of welfare recipients and saved the states money, usually in five years or less. Dr. Judith Gueron, director of the MDRC studies, stated, "We've known for some time that these programs increase employment and earnings in the short term. We now know that these results continue for at least three years." She added that "...these findings are striking because...they show consistently positive outcomes across a wide range of environments."38

Despite these positive indications, some are skeptical. Douglas Besharov, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, points out that the key test workfare must pass is that of removing the long-term unemployed off welfare. He points out that half of all recipients are on welfare for nearly seven years on average, and nearly 25% of AFDC recipients stay on for 10 years or more.

The recent "wave of innovative workfare experiments" have achieved only moderate success, Mr. Besharov points out, and that is not good enough. He cites a recent GAO report on state workfare experiments, which concludes: "Evaluations of the work programs have

38 MDRC, "Findings on State Welfare Employment Programs," January 1987
shown modest positive effects... (but) should not be expected to produce massive reductions welfare rolls. 39

Recently released studies show, however, that Besharov's skepticism may be unwarranted. The first study of the long-term effects of workfare was completed by MDRC on the work program in Ohio. These results showed that workfare induced a 17% reduction in four years for AFDC families and 60% for AFDC-UP (male-headed) families. These results far exceed the short term gains posted by workfare and even the long term gains of other education and training initiatives. 40

Faced with such successes - moderate and not so moderate - the important question becomes not whether workfare programs work but rather what makes them work. One of the most popular theories about the success of workfare holds that workfare succeeds in reducing rolls not because it teaches people to work but rather because it kicks the freeloaders out of the system.

Supporters of this idea point to cases such as the one in New York City in 1983 when a work for welfare requirement was placed on welfare mothers with children over 17 years old. The city found that an astounding 50% of the mothers did not show up for work, with the knowledge that this meant elimination of benefits. When this

40 WSJ, "Go Slow on Welfare Reform," 18 March 1987
requirement was made of mothers with children 14 to 17, a smaller percentage- 25%- refused to work.

The administrators in charge of the program concluded that abuse was widespread in the system and that these women must have been working already and illegally collecting welfare. However, several factors must be considered before assuming that such "double-dipping" has taken over our entire welfare system. First of all, the group was very small and very specific- fewer than 500 women with fully grown children. These older women were raised in the era when the norm was for the woman to stay at home, and many may not have had much work experience. When forced by the government to work at menial jobs, some may have opted to "tough it out" or to rely on their grown children for support. In support of this possibility, the younger group of women- with kids 14 to 17- showed a much greater willingness to work.41

In fact, much empirical evidence shows that elimination of freeloaders is not the reason for workfare's success. For example, in the study done of workfare programs in Ohio, relatively few recipients were sanctioned for refusing to work. Moreover, the number of applicants did not diminish after workfare requirements were imposed.

Also, in a study conducted of a San Diego workfare program, less than one in ten participants failed to show up for required work and

41 WSJ, "Workers and Welfare," 5 July 1988
were penalized as a result. While a ten percent rate is not negligible, it certainly is not significant enough to be the main factor. The authors of the study concluded that "...there was no evidence in San Diego that the work mandate, as it was administered, deterred individuals from completing their welfare applications or 'smoked out' large numbers of AFDC women who held jobs with unreported income." 42

If workfare does not act as a great deterrent and the elimination of freeloaders is not responsible for the reductions of caseloads, what can be the reason for its success? Larry Mead suggests that the reason workfare has been more successful than WIN and other programs is twofold. First, he argues, the new programs have a much more flexible approach to administration. The MDRC studies support this claim, and Judith Gueron calls this "...a major management achievement (which) reflects a change in institutional and staff attitudes." 43

Second, and more important, Mead argues, the Workfare programs usually achieve higher participation rates for the eligible participants. Mead's research into participation rates, documented in the Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, shows that "...programs that demanded participation from a high proportion of their caseload moved many recipients into jobs, while those that did not failed to do so." 44 In WIN, he points out, only one in four eligible recipients actually participated in job search or work-related activities.

42 MDRC, "Reforming Welfare with Work"
43 MDRC, "Reforming Welfare with Work," p.19
44 Mead, Lawrence, "Potential for Work Enforcement: A Study of WIN."
JPAM,Vol 7 #2, 1987
Reasons often given were lack of funds and the states' nature to "cream"- to demand work effort only of the most employable welfare recipients so that program success rates would look good.

To Mead, and a growing number of observers, "Workfare means implementing a serious work requirement for the first time, not toughening that requirement."45 He points to the success stories in San Diego and elsewhere where participation rates have been much higher than the 25% for WIN. The best run and best funded of these programs achieve 50% participation rates.

Supporting Mead's conclusion that workfare succeeds because of its ability to enforce work requirements is Bradley Schiller, professor of economics at American University's School of Public Affairs. Schiller believes that once able-bodied welfare recipients- even long-term recipients- are required to be in a work environment, they can only benefit. He holds that workfare has been successful in moving significant numbers of the permanent caseload off welfare- as in Ohio- because "...it compels work habits and experience that long-term welfare recipients lack." He continues to say that workfare "...also provides job knowledge and contacts that can create job opportunities."46

Many critics, while recognizing the potential for such benefits, had feared that Workfare jobs would too often be menial, unrewarding

45 Mead, Lawrence, Interview
46 WSJ, "As States Show, Workfare Gets Job Done Fast, " 28 June 1988
tasks that would entrap rather than liberate the poor. Recent studies show, however, that these fears may be unfounded. The studies show that Workfare as implemented in the 1980's "...has been designed to provide useful work experience...(and) as a result, the work positions quite often resemble quality public service employment jobs, structured to meet public needs and to provide meaningful work experience."\textsuperscript{47}

Another fear critics voiced was that workfare requirements would amount to "slavefare," but findings suggest that this is far from the case. Most states did not design or implement Workfare with a punitive intent, these studies show. Furthermore, worksite surveys indicate that the majority of participants felt that the work requirement was fair and beneficial. Thus, it seems that while Workfare programs "...did not create the work ethic, they found it."\textsuperscript{48}

There is still much controversy and debate over Workfare. Recent studies of Workfare experiments in a number of states indicate, however, that Workfare is at least as successful as WIN and older programs, and possibly far more successful. The controversy over the very existence of Workfare is likely to continue as long as some hold on to their belief that Workfare is a stop-gap measure providing only near-poverty level, menial jobs. Even if this were the case for pure, unadulterated Workfare- and there is reason to think otherwise- it is nearly impossible to envision, in light of all of the education, training, child care, and transition benefits attached to the Family Support Act of

\textsuperscript{47} MDRC, "Reforming Welfare with Work," p.30
\textsuperscript{48} MDRC, "Reforming Welfare with Work," p.20
1988, such sweatshop conditions coming to fruition. More likely, the entry of partisan politics- the art of compromise- has forever altered the nature of Workfare and tamed what may have been a cruel beast and harnessed the raw motivating power of its requirements while cushioning the impact of its severity with the safety net of support services and benefits. In any case, it appears that the beast is here to stay.
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