The War on Poverty: Win, Lose or Draw?

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It is approaching the fifth decade of the War on Poverty, nearly half a century. Debate still exists, however, about the effects of the program. Policy-makers expression of dissatisfaction with the nation’s welfare policy 1990’s led to the passage of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families in 1996. We remain unsure about what the impact of welfare expenditures prior to and more contemporaneously, from that point forward. I argue in this paper that by examining the correlation between aggregate dollars spent and the corresponding level of poverty, a relationship between welfare policy and poverty can be discerned. Further, by disaggregating the policy at the state level for the 50 states and examining the dollars appropriated to each state and the corresponding level of poverty for each. I suggest that a comprehensive measure can be designed to demonstrate the significance of the impact of the federal welfare policy on each state.

Emerging from preliminary research, I hypothesize that welfare aid is a disincentive to those receiving that very aid. While promising in the short term, I anticipate that welfare expenditures restrict a long term solution rather than being a solution for the economically disadvantaged. Additionally, I expect to find variances in the effects of welfare policy, not only by state, but also among groups in differing states. As anticipated, preliminary results demonstrate the short term relief of the effects of poverty, while revealing a long term elimination of poverty is not accomplished.

The “War on Poverty” was officially declared under the Johnson administration in 1964 via the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The Johnson administration called for an “all-out war on poverty” (Johnson) in his State of the Union Address to Congress on January 8, 1964. From the beginning there were different views of what the policy was about as well as what it was to accomplish. Some saw it as a means to activate impoverished voters (Davidson). Some saw the Office of Economic Opportunity as a coordinating agency while others, such as Sargent Shriver, saw it as an operating agency (Sundquist). Still others saw the policy as a means of actually addressing the issue of poverty along with certain issues that fed the problem such as inadequate education, housing and medical care.(Humphrey) And finally, there were yet others who saw the act as a choosing of one of two available beliefs and subsequent remedies for poverty; both of which were well over one hundred years old and lastly, a contemporary view of the solution based in the idea of tribal membership. Interestingly enough, the article that describes this also points out the dissatisfaction at the time from both the disrepute of welfare from the camps viewing it as “something for nothing” as well as those disliking the administration of the programs already in existence. Finally the author concludes that in spite of the claims of poverty elimination by 1976, it will not be done. (Hamilton) From the beginning through the mid-1990’s this War on Poverty had its’ evangelists as well as its’ doubters. These came from multiple academic perspectives as well as policy perspectives: political (Kerr), economic (Berkowitz), psychological as well as sociological. (Etzioni)

Along with the detractors are the staunch supporters of this War on Poverty and its’ necessity as conceived, who even into the late 1980’s and on, continue defending the minimal loss of economic ability by the non-poor. (Haveman) Doubt, however, maintained sufficiency that in due time would be multiplied to enough data, as well as a lack of abatement in popular attitudes toward dependency (Davies), that reformation of policy would be addressed by Congress. That reform would be signed into law in 1996 by then President Bill Clinton and known as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. There exists a plethora of literature on dissatisfaction with the War on Poverty as well as TANF from reasons for failure to calls for better implementation to charges of political grandstanding (this being the reason for the policy in the first place) (Critchlow) to racial discrimination charges as basis for the policy to ineffective implementation of the policy. (Amenta) There is no shortage of examination of the political and cultural doings around the policy as well as its’ reform, TANF. In an article by Dale Jorgenson, the argument is made that the War on Poverty was won if the data is based on household consumption rather that household income. It is only from this perspective that these series of policies can be considered effective. (Jorgenson)Even post-2000, some in the academic community are re-presenting arguments to make effective the idea of the War on Policy. (Bell and Wray) However, as evidenced by a 2001 article by Mills et al., (Mills, Dorai-Raj and Peterson) the War on Poverty is and has been incorrectly labeled. Indeed what the War on Poverty and subsequently the perception of TANF in literature critical of the policy approaches in either iteration address not necessarily an elimination of poverty itself or its’ causes but the symptoms of poverty. The attitudes, both societal and political, that brought about TANF in 1996 were a combination of the base ideas of Liberty for the average American citizen and a rejection of dependency. As proposed earlier and supported by literature throughout the history of this policy approach and the current reforms, these are not ‘cures’ to poverty as ‘sold’ by policy proponents but temporary salves for the symptoms of poverty.

In demonstrating this proposition I will take a simple approach methodologically by simply comparing total expenditures per state compared to the corresponding poverty rates. Data for these comparisons come from the United States Census Bureau (for poverty rates) and United States Department of Health and Human Services (for expenditure figures). Beginning with the year enacted, 1996, through 2011 (1996 contains only poverty rate information as that is the year TANF was enacted) I will correlate expenditures with poverty rate. In order to maintain a consistent view of the dollar amounts involved the dollar value must be equitable. The method applied to achieve this perspective will be one used by the field of finance which is to average the price of gold per given year and divide that by the rate of $38 per ounce, the price last set in 1972 before the gold standard was removed. While some may disagree with this method it does lend to a consistent dollar value of the monetary values examined. The reason for not using the Consumer Price Index is the fact that it adjusts its’ reference point periodically to a more recent year which does not lend to a constant dollar value. A factor not considered in this work due to the scope of this particular project, yet acknowledged as under considered, is cost of living for any given state. While the functional poverty line is different for different states and often even areas within the same state the limitations here prevail.

While the methodology is uncomplicated the amount of data is significant over the fourteen years analyzed. Given that there is some fluctuation in poverty rate one might assume a fluctuation in economic cycles. However when the dollar is averaged against a constant, the picture is not a pleasant one for those who might support such welfare programs. For a beginning point, let us consider the amount of expenditures versus the poverty rate in 1997, the first fiscal year after TANF was passed. What is shown in the following table are Line 7 Total Expenditures from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which is the total amount of dollars spent (not allotted). The column labeled Annual $ Constant Factor is the correlation factor between the average price of an ounce of gold for the year examined relative to the 1972 fixed price. The column labeled 1972 Constant $ is the constant dollar after calculating for the fluctuation of the U.S. dollar based on the average annual price of an ounce of gold which gives a more consistent picture of the cost of the policy. Finally the column labeled Poverty Rate as a % is the poverty rate of the U.S. as a whole and subsequently by each of the fifty states.

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| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **STATE** | **Line 7** |  |  |  | | **TOTAL** |  |  |  | | **EXPENDITURES** | **Annual $** | **1972 Constant $** | **Poverty Rate as a %** | | **(Assistance** | **Constant Factor** |  |  | | **and Non)** |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | | **U.S. Total** | 10,040,044,543 | 8.711053 | $87,459,360,136.43 | 13.3 | | **ALABAMA** | 96,393,656 | 8.711053 | $839,690,246.28 | 16.2 | | **ALASKA** | 27,155,591 | 8.711053 | $236,553,792.45 | 11.2 | | **ARIZONA** | 290,119,561 | 8.711053 | $2,527,246,872.21 | 15.5 | | **ARKANSAS** | 21,025,958 | 8.711053 | $183,158,234.51 | 17.5 | | **CALIFORNIA** | 4,852,272,596 | 8.711053 | $42,268,403,754.20 | 16 | | **COLORADO** | 50,185,934 | 8.711053 | $437,172,330.93 | 10.2 | | **CONNECTICUT** | 427,421,723 | 8.711053 | $3,723,293,282.40 | 8.9 | | **DELAWARE** | 33,392,577 | 8.711053 | $290,884,508.05 | 10 | | **DIST.OF COLUMBIA** | 81,791,330 | 8.711053 | $712,488,610.57 | 19.3 | | **FLORIDA** | 747,436,232 | 8.711053 | $6,510,956,631.07 | 14.4 | | **GEORGIA** | 359,233,875 | 8.711053 | $3,129,305,324.52 | 14.7 | | **HAWAII** | 44,927,792 | 8.711053 | $391,368,377.28 | 11.1 | | **IDAHO** | 6,052,736 | 8.711053 | $52,725,704.09 | 13 | | **ILLINOIS** | 243,265,634 | 8.711053 | $2,119,099,830.85 | 11.3 | | **INDIANA** | 192,405,991 | 8.711053 | $1,676,058,785.12 | 9.9 | | **IOWA** | 127,793,929 | 8.711053 | $1,113,219,688.60 | 9.9 | | **KANSAS** | 163,812,589 | 8.711053 | $1,426,980,144.85 | 10.9 | | **KENTUCKY** | 209,102,831 | 8.711053 | $1,821,505,843.29 | 16 | | **LOUISIANA** | 116,459,871 | 8.711053 | $1,014,488,108.65 | 18.4 | | **MAINE** | 120,142,976 | 8.711053 | $1,046,571,831.51 | 10.7 | | **MARYLAND** | 248,720,078 | 8.711053 | $2,166,613,781.62 | 9.5 | | **MASSACHUSETTS** | 680,507,304 | 8.711053 | $5,927,935,192.03 | 10.7 | | **MICHIGAN** | 1,106,652,391 | 8.711053 | $9,640,107,630.58 | 11.5 | | **MINNESOTA** | 96,305,989 | 8.711053 | $838,926,574.40 | 8.9 | | **MISSISSIPPI** | 94,086,427 | 8.711053 | $819,591,852.18 | 18.1 | | **MISSOURI** | 272,397,647 | 8.711053 | $2,372,870,340.09 | 12.2 | | **MONTANA** | 33,885,161 | 8.711053 | $295,175,433.38 | 15.5 | | **NEBRASKA** | 55,115,791 | 8.711053 | $480,116,576.54 | 9.6 | | **NEVADA** | 51,578,052 | 8.711053 | $449,299,144.61 | 10.7 | | **NEW HAMPSHIRE** | 68,869,318 | 8.711053 | $599,924,279.17 | 7.5 | | **NEW JERSEY** | 423,827,217 | 8.711053 | $3,691,981,350.13 | 9.3 | | **NEW MEXICO** | 105,295,793 | 8.711053 | $917,237,233.50 | 19.3 | | **NEW YORK** | 3,156,769,159 | 8.711053 | $27,498,783,452.81 | 15.6 | | **NORTH CAROLINA** | 297,188,345 | 8.711053 | $2,588,823,424.28 | 12.6 | | **NORTH DAKOTA** | 6,401,228 | 8.711053 | $55,761,436.37 | 12.5 | | **OHIO** | 895,746,767 | 8.711053 | $7,802,897,561.92 | 11 | | **OKLAHOMA** | 147,515,599 | 8.711053 | $1,285,016,201.22 | 16.3 | | **OREGON** | 242,342,674 | 8.711053 | $2,111,059,877.38 | 11.6 | | **PENNSYLVANIA** | 545,794,644 | 8.711053 | $4,754,446,071.00 | 10.9 | | **RHODE ISLAND** | 65,634,208 | 8.711053 | $571,743,064.50 | 11.2 | | **SOUTH CAROLINA** | 120,301,518 | 8.711053 | $1,047,952,899.28 | 14.9 | | **SOUTH DAKOTA** | 21,544,546 | 8.711053 | $187,675,682.07 | 14 | | **TENNESSEE** | 237,175,988 | 8.711053 | $2,066,052,601.80 | 13.6 | | **TEXAS** | 600,264,321 | 8.711053 | $5,228,934,314.24 | 16.7 | | **UTAH** | 99,206,731 | 8.711053 | $864,195,091.70 | 10 | | **VERMONT** | 91,882,678 | 8.711053 | $800,394,877.84 | 9.7 | | **VIRGINIA** | 149,834,547 | 8.711053 | $1,305,216,680.15 | 11.6 | | **WASHINGTON** | 436,992,766 | 8.711053 | $3,806,667,145.24 | 10.2 | | **WEST VIRGINIA** | 81,348,293 | 8.711053 | $708,629,291.78 | 16.8 | | **WISCONSIN** | 354,832,186 | 8.711053 | $3,090,961,978.35 | 9.2 | | **WYOMING** | 11,779,700 | 8.711053 | $102,613,591.02 | 12 | |

1997 figures from U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services

As can be seen in the previous table, funds disbursed (not allotted) were considerable in the first year of TANF. By averaging to 1972 dollars a more consistent picture is arrived at. Also, the beginning point after a fiscal year of funding as per poverty rates gives a fair starting point. However, what are the changes at the five year mark of the program, 2001, when comparing expenditures with change in poverty rates by state as well as aggregate. A slight drop in poverty rate appears at this point not only in the aggregate but by state as well. Likewise the overall expenditure has not risen overly much across the board, about .2%. When considering the dollars calculated to a constant dollar the effects appear even more positive as this dollar amount is lower than the initial years’ expenditures. Likewise, the corresponding poverty rate not only overall in the U.S. but even in those states which traditionally have the highest poverty rates show a drop in the poverty rate.

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| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **STATE** | **Line 7** |  |  |  | |  | **TOTAL** |  |  |  | |  | **EXPENDITURES** | Annual $ | $ equivalent to 1972 | All Ages in poverty Percent | |  | **(Assistance** | Constant Factor |  |  | |  | **and Non)** |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  | | **U.S. Total** | 10,058,551,014 | 7.132632 | $71,743,942,836.09 | 11.7 | | **ALABAMA** | 105,122,351 | 7.132632 | $749,799,044.66 | 15.7 | | **ALASKA** | 85,566,300 | 7.132632 | $610,312,929.50 | 8.7 | | **ARIZONA** | 273,905,770 | 7.132632 | $1,953,669,060.09 | 13.2 | | **ARKANSAS** | 90,477,332 | 7.132632 | $645,341,513.50 | 15.9 | | **CALIFORNIA** | 6,466,433,568 | 7.132632 | $46,122,690,992.99 | 12.9 | | **COLORADO** | 188,777,087 | 7.132632 | $1,346,477,491.60 | 8.7 | | **CONNECTICUT** | 412,732,430 | 7.132632 | $2,943,868,537.66 | 7.1 | | **DELAWARE** | 55,769,737 | 7.132632 | $397,785,010.76 | 8.4 | | **DIST.OF COLUMBIA** | 167,390,319 | 7.132632 | $1,193,933,545.79 | 17.5 | | **FLORIDA** | 925,577,299 | 7.132632 | $6,601,802,261.32 | 12.6 | | **GEORGIA** | 474,014,807 | 7.132632 | $3,380,973,180.88 | 12.7 | | **HAWAII** | 150,198,294 | 7.132632 | $1,071,309,158.13 | 10.4 | | **IDAHO** | 45,614,215 | 7.132632 | $325,349,409.56 | 11.5 | | **ILLINOIS** | 956,098,335 | 7.132632 | $6,819,497,579.37 | 10.1 | | **INDIANA** | 351,870,302 | 7.132632 | $2,509,761,375.89 | 9 | | **IOWA** | 158,532,769 | 7.132632 | $1,130,755,901.22 | 8.2 | | **KANSAS** | 149,799,620 | 7.132632 | $1,068,465,563.20 | 9.5 | | **KENTUCKY** | 210,619,279 | 7.132632 | $1,502,269,809.21 | 14.7 | | **LOUISIANA** | 127,891,331 | 7.132632 | $912,201,800.01 | 18.3 | | **MAINE** | 100,316,945 | 7.132632 | $715,523,852.05 | 10.2 | | **MARYLAND** | 395,449,990 | 7.132632 | $2,820,599,253.07 | 7.7 | | **MASSACHUSETTS** | 681,471,386 | 7.132632 | $4,860,684,614.87 | 8.2 | | **MICHIGAN** | 1,249,440,351 | 7.132632 | $8,911,798,229.63 | 9.8 | | **MINNESOTA** | 429,863,995 | 7.132632 | $3,066,061,686.38 | 7.2 | | **MISSISSIPPI** | 131,020,538 | 7.132632 | $934,521,282.00 | 19 | | **MISSOURI** | 341,900,197 | 7.132632 | $2,438,648,285.93 | 11 | | **MONTANA** | 50,949,140 | 7.132632 | $363,401,466.34 | 14 | | **NEBRASKA** | 62,742,220 | 7.132632 | $447,517,166.12 | 9.3 | | **NEVADA** | 61,380,624 | 7.132632 | $437,805,402.92 | 9.3 | | **NEW HAMPSHIRE** | 63,599,258 | 7.132632 | $453,630,102.79 | 6 | | **NEW JERSEY** | 554,988,679 | 7.132632 | $3,958,530,011.47 | 7.8 | | **NEW MEXICO** | 152,988,695 | 7.132632 | $1,091,212,061.60 | 18 | | **NEW YORK** | 3,804,797,504 | 7.132632 | $27,138,220,430.55 | 13.7 | | **NORTH CAROLINA** | 475,411,765 | 7.132632 | $3,390,937,168.22 | 11.9 | | **NORTH DAKOTA** | 37,001,564 | 7.132632 | $263,918,539.44 | 11.4 | | **OHIO** | 1,158,311,538 | 7.132632 | $8,261,809,941.91 | 10.3 | | **OKLAHOMA** | 124,476,940 | 7.132632 | $887,848,205.51 | 14.4 | | **OREGON** | 290,627,592 | 7.132632 | $2,072,939,662.78 | 11.1 | | **PENNSYLVANIA** | 974,676,201 | 7.132632 | $6,952,006,660.89 | 10 | | **RHODE ISLAND** | 161,982,667 | 7.132632 | $1,155,362,754.09 | 10.2 | | **SOUTH CAROLINA** | 127,796,693 | 7.132632 | $911,526,781.99 | 13.8 | | **SOUTH DAKOTA** | 20,954,092 | 7.132632 | $149,457,827.13 | 11.7 | | **TENNESSEE** | 283,143,556 | 7.132632 | $2,019,558,788.12 | 13.2 | | **TEXAS** | 752,985,225 | 7.132632 | $5,370,766,511.36 | 15 | | **UTAH** | 79,561,630 | 7.132632 | $567,483,828.11 | 9.4 | | **VERMONT** | 61,323,913 | 7.132632 | $437,400,904.23 | 8.9 | | **VIRGINIA** | 255,144,613 | 7.132632 | $1,819,852,631.31 | 8.8 | | **WASHINGTON** | 658,945,967 | 7.132632 | $4,700,019,090.50 | 9.9 | | **WEST VIRGINIA** | 204,966,261 | 7.132632 | $1,461,948,912.13 | 16.7 | | **WISCONSIN** | 494,213,546 | 7.132632 | $3,525,043,353.03 | 8.1 | | **WYOMING** | 28,556,525 | 7.132632 | $203,683,184.02 | 10.5 | |

2001 figures from U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services

While this appears to be good news when taken at the five year marker when continuing out to the next five year mark a reversal of trend shows. The greatest disparity, however, is in the column showing the $ Equivalent to 1972, our constant. While the aggregate spent in 2006 dollars shows only a slight rise (10.4%) to keep poverty rates relatively stable with a slight rise in U.S. rate to 13.3% overall, it is this ‘constant’ dollar figure that becomes surprising. With an aggregate expenditure equivalent 1972 dollars in the amount of $178 billion the amount spent loses ground to a rising poverty rate. Why does this constant dollar value really matter, especially in regards to poverty rates? The constant dollar is a more accurate indicator of purchasing power because it inherently also reflects the cost to produce goods because of the cost of materials is also affected by this fluctuation.

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| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **STATE** | **Line 7** |  |  |  | | **TOTAL** |  |  |  | | **EXPENDITURES** | **Annual $** | **1972 Constant $** | **All Ages in poverty Percent** | | **(Assistance** | **Constant Factor** |  |  | | **and Non-Assistance)** |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | | **U.S. Total** | 11,224,685,347 | 15.88053 | $178,253,952,393.59 | 13.3 | | **ALABAMA** | 107,329,981 | 15.88053 | $1,704,456,983.17 | 16.6 | | **ALASKA** | 69,846,279 | 15.88053 | $1,109,195,929.05 | 10.9 | | **ARIZONA** | 309,260,515 | 15.88053 | $4,911,220,886.27 | 14.2 | | **ARKANSAS** | 74,367,776 | 15.88053 | $1,180,999,697.80 | 17.3 | | **CALIFORNIA** | 6,280,374,921 | 15.88053 | $99,735,682,344.19 | 13.1 | | **COLORADO** | 209,433,371 | 15.88053 | $3,325,912,931.17 | 11.6 | | **CONNECTICUT** | 469,128,109 | 15.88053 | $7,450,003,008.82 | 8.3 | | **DELAWARE** | 76,634,656 | 15.88053 | $1,216,998,953.65 | 10.7 | | **DIST.OF COLUMBIA** | 193,357,600 | 15.88053 | $3,070,621,167.53 | 18.1 | | **FLORIDA** | 808,417,556 | 15.88053 | $12,838,099,250.58 | 12.6 | | **GEORGIA** | 581,661,388 | 15.88053 | $9,237,091,121.98 | 14.8 | | **HAWAII** | 156,407,754 | 15.88053 | $2,483,838,029.63 | 9.4 | | **IDAHO** | 38,925,727 | 15.88053 | $618,161,175.40 | 12.8 | | **ILLINOIS** | 981,718,525 | 15.88053 | $15,590,210,487.82 | 12.3 | | **INDIANA** | 315,966,663 | 15.88053 | $5,017,718,070.77 | 12.5 | | **IOWA** | 165,638,273 | 15.88053 | $2,630,423,563.52 | 11 | | **KANSAS** | 152,006,758 | 15.88053 | $2,413,947,880.62 | 12.2 | | **KENTUCKY** | 190,010,276 | 15.88053 | $3,017,463,888.33 | 17 | | **LOUISIANA** | 183,403,367 | 15.88053 | $2,912,542,671.74 | 19.4 | | **MAINE** | 108,093,342 | 15.88053 | $1,716,579,560.43 | 12.7 | | **MARYLAND** | 357,073,217 | 15.88053 | $5,670,511,934.77 | 8 | | **MASSACHUSETTS** | 794,151,201 | 15.88053 | $12,611,541,972.02 | 10 | | **MICHIGAN** | 1,186,564,912 | 15.88053 | $18,843,279,681.96 | 13.5 | | **MINNESOTA** | 402,737,483 | 15.88053 | $6,395,684,680.91 | 9.7 | | **MISSISSIPPI** | 74,005,118 | 15.88053 | $1,175,240,496.55 | 20.9 | | **MISSOURI** | 323,472,629 | 15.88053 | $5,136,916,789.01 | 13.8 | | **MONTANA** | 42,769,237 | 15.88053 | $679,198,151.26 | 14.4 | | **NEBRASKA** | 92,389,231 | 15.88053 | $1,467,189,954.57 | 11.3 | | **NEVADA** | 66,955,455 | 15.88053 | $1,063,288,111.79 | 10.5 | | **NEW HAMPSHIRE** | 70,312,922 | 15.88053 | $1,116,606,467.21 | 8 | | **NEW JERSEY** | 585,503,366 | 15.88053 | $9,298,103,768.86 | 8.7 | | **NEW MEXICO** | 108,645,675 | 15.88053 | $1,725,350,901.21 | 18.3 | | **NEW YORK** | 4,240,956,313 | 15.88053 | $67,348,633,957.29 | 14.2 | | **NORTH CAROLINA** | 250,304,294 | 15.88053 | $3,974,964,850.00 | 14.6 | | **NORTH DAKOTA** | 31,748,346 | 15.88053 | $504,180,561.10 | 11.7 | | **OHIO** | 1,120,054,520 | 15.88053 | $17,787,059,406.50 | 13.2 | | **OKLAHOMA** | 150,972,622 | 15.88053 | $2,397,525,252.85 | 16.7 | | **OREGON** | 251,418,793 | 15.88053 | $3,992,663,684.80 | 13.4 | | **PENNSYLVANIA** | 993,770,890 | 15.88053 | $15,781,608,431.77 | 12 | | **RHODE ISLAND** | 143,930,107 | 15.88053 | $2,285,686,382.12 | 11.5 | | **SOUTH CAROLINA** | 145,275,024 | 15.88053 | $2,307,044,376.88 | 15.7 | | **SOUTH DAKOTA** | 28,902,434 | 15.88053 | $458,985,970.21 | 13.6 | | **TENNESSEE** | 266,409,235 | 15.88053 | $4,230,719,848.69 | 16.1 | | **TEXAS** | 731,033,975 | 15.88053 | $11,609,206,971.01 | 16.9 | | **UTAH** | 95,796,684 | 15.88053 | $1,521,302,114.16 | 10.7 | | **VERMONT** | 64,084,089 | 15.88053 | $1,017,689,297.89 | 10.2 | | **VIRGINIA** | 290,932,612 | 15.88053 | $4,620,164,072.84 | 9.6 | | **WASHINGTON** | 633,319,800 | 15.88053 | $10,057,454,083.49 | 11.8 | | **WEST VIRGINIA** | 115,049,674 | 15.88053 | $1,827,049,799.45 | 17.6 | | **WISCONSIN** | 440,260,368 | 15.88053 | $6,991,567,981.84 | 10.9 | | **WYOMING** | 23,025,999 | 15.88053 | $365,665,067.90 | 10.3 | |

2006 figures from U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services

In the 2011 table that follows, another rise in both rate of poverty as well as expenditures in current dollars as well as our constant 1972 dollar continues occurs. In fact the aggregate expenditure nearly triples over this five year period while corresponding to a rise in the poverty rate both aggregate as well as at state levels. With aggregate expenditures over $30 billion, if the premise of the War on Poverty or even the reforms brought about through TANF were sound a decrease in poverty could reasonably be expected. However, when one considers that there does not appear to be a positive correlation between the expenditures and poverty rate but in fact an inverse relation, should not the soundness of the original premise be called into question?

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| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  |  |  |  |  | | **STATE** | **TOTAL ASSISTANCE AND NON-ASSISTANCE EXPENDITURES** | **Annual $ Constant Factor** | **1972 Constant $** | **All Ages in poverty Percent** | |  |  |  |  |  | | U.S. TOTAL | $30,624,118,314 | 41.35579 | $1,266,484,605,928.94 | 15.9 | | ALABAMA | $184,763,017 | 41.35579 | $7,641,020,530.82 | 19.1 | | ALASKA | $66,298,196 | 41.35579 | $2,741,814,271.15 | 10.8 | | ARIZONA | $358,556,919 | 41.35579 | $14,828,404,645.21 | 19 | | ARKANSAS | $186,593,246 | 41.35579 | $7,716,711,096.99 | 19.3 | | CALIFORNIA | $6,674,677,301 | 41.35579 | $276,036,552,777.92 | 16.6 | | COLORADO | $318,107,617 | 41.35579 | $13,155,591,806.05 | 13.4 | | CONNECTICUT | $482,570,156 | 41.35579 | $19,957,070,031.80 | 10.8 | | DELAWARE | $79,324,359 | 41.35579 | $3,280,521,532.69 | 12.6 | | DIST.OF COLUMBIA | $249,872,756 | 41.35579 | $10,333,685,223.86 | 19.1 | | FLORIDA | $834,073,269 | 41.35579 | $34,493,758,957.38 | 17 | | GEORGIA | $561,502,767 | 41.35579 | $23,221,390,516.47 | 19.2 | | HAWAII | $317,337,786 | 41.35579 | $13,123,754,836.88 | 12.1 | | IDAHO | $25,888,064 | 41.35579 | $1,070,621,338.29 | 16.5 | | ILLINOIS | $1,311,050,647 | 41.35579 | $54,219,535,236.70 | 14.9 | | INDIANA | $292,230,235 | 41.35579 | $12,085,412,230.31 | 15.8 | | IOWA | $195,699,997 | 41.35579 | $8,093,327,978.93 | 12.7 | | KANSAS | $213,316,638 | 41.35579 | $8,821,878,084.63 | 13.8 | | KENTUCKY | $246,939,849 | 41.35579 | $10,212,392,537.88 | 19.1 | | LOUISIANA | $276,612,891 | 41.35579 | $11,439,544,631.49 | 20.5 | | MAINE | $129,562,449 | 41.35579 | $5,358,157,432.73 | 14.2 | | MARYLAND | $454,564,757 | 41.35579 | $18,798,884,631.89 | 10.2 | | MASSACHUSETTS | $1,022,055,560 | 41.35579 | $42,267,915,107.69 | 11.6 | | MICHIGAN | $1,376,629,731 | 41.35579 | $56,931,610,062.99 | 17.5 | | MINNESOTA | $434,204,017 | 41.35579 | $17,956,850,144.21 | 11.8 | | MISSISSIPPI | $109,841,555 | 41.35579 | $4,542,584,281.85 | 22.8 | | MISSOURI | $323,315,070 | 41.35579 | $13,370,950,138.76 | 15.8 | | MONTANA | $44,337,665 | 41.35579 | $1,833,619,162.83 | 15.2 | | NEBRASKA | $111,646,298 | 41.35579 | $4,617,220,854.37 | 12.9 | | NEVADA | $118,877,591 | 41.35579 | $4,916,276,689.10 | 15.8 | | NEW HAMPSHIRE | $78,295,365 | 41.35579 | $3,237,966,672.91 | 9 | | NEW JERSEY | $1,184,254,525 | 41.35579 | $48,975,781,442.45 | 10.4 | | NEW MEXICO | $191,736,019 | 41.35579 | $7,929,394,537.20 | 20.9 | | NEW YORK | $4,954,204,982 | 41.35579 | $204,885,060,852.55 | 16.1 | | NORTH CAROLINA | $628,657,903 | 41.35579 | $25,998,644,218.31 | 17.8 | | NORTH DAKOTA | $34,930,739 | 41.35579 | $1,444,588,306.63 | 12 | | OHIO | $1,187,487,786 | 41.35579 | $49,109,495,505.38 | 16.3 | | OKLAHOMA | $172,633,114 | 41.35579 | $7,139,378,809.63 | 17.3 | | OREGON | $342,589,061 | 41.35579 | $14,168,041,263.01 | 17.3 | | PENNSYLVANIA | $943,154,587 | 41.35579 | $39,004,903,037.51 | 13.7 | | RHODE ISLAND | $139,895,762 | 41.35579 | $5,785,499,755.16 | 14.7 | | SOUTH CAROLINA | $237,488,686 | 41.35579 | $9,821,532,225.59 | 18.8 | | SOUTH DAKOTA | $31,084,340 | 41.35579 | $1,285,517,437.33 | 14.1 | | TENNESSEE | $360,975,328 | 41.35579 | $14,928,419,859.95 | 18.4 | | TEXAS | $810,494,208 | 41.35579 | $33,518,628,262.26 | 18.5 | | UTAH | $116,358,468 | 41.35579 | $4,812,096,367.33 | 13.6 | | VERMONT | $73,028,114 | 41.35579 | $3,020,135,346.68 | 11.9 | | VIRGINIA | $287,626,635 | 41.35579 | $11,895,026,715.47 | 11.6 | | WASHINGTON | $1,063,275,410 | 41.35579 | $43,972,594,568.12 | 13.9 | | WEST VIRGINIA | $171,955,410 | 41.35579 | $7,111,351,825.32 | 18.7 | | WISCONSIN | $576,566,670 | 41.35579 | $23,844,370,125.52 | 13.1 | | WYOMING | $36,974,799 | 41.35579 | $1,529,122,022.74 | 11.3 | |

2011 figures from U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services

While these tables are snapshots they are telling where not only TANF is concerned but the policy approach from the beginning with the War on Poverty. These tables are just part of the evidence which supports my hypothesis; that being that TANF is a band aid program for the symptoms of poverty rather than a helpful approach to actually solving the problem. The data shows that poverty rates continue to increase overall albeit with minimal abatement of poverty rates at times. The more disconcerting picture that emerges is not that poverty rates are rising but that they are doing so in spite of exponential increases in expenditures whether in current dollars or the constant of 1972 equivalent dollars. Between the years 1997 to 2011, a total of $212.24 billion has been spent through TANF to alleviate poverty. The lowest aggregate poverty rate achieved in any given year of this period was 2000 in which the aggregate poverty rate for the U.S. was 11.3%. When averaging the poverty rate over those 15 years to account for periodic declines and increases, one still ends up with an average poverty rate of 13.1%. Elimination of poverty through aid does not appear to be realistic.

Borrowed from the U.S. Census Bureau, the above chart shows the trajectory of all 50 states as well as the U.S. where poverty rates are concerned. It begins the year TANF is signed into law and runs through 2011.

While the reform policy addressed the concerns of policy makers as well as their constituency where welfare policy was concerned, the data bears out no change in effect of the program compared to previous policy approaches where outcome is concerned. The trend line in the U.S. Census chart shows the overall trend as gently moving upward. Had TANF been effective, one should expect to see those trend lines in decline. However, that is not the case. As has been the data bears out, the poverty rate has been unaffected by expenditures to eliminate it.

In conclusion, the idea of poverty is based on income. While Jorgensen’s suggestion that based on consumption, poverty has been eliminated, the fact that this consumption is reliant on aid from government does not comply with most accepted definitions of poverty especially within the United States. In spite of the fact that Jorgensen’s perspective is interesting, I do not believe that the perception of poverty as a consumption issue will replace the view of poverty as an income issue. The policy approaches of the last five plus decades have proven ineffective for a number of reasons. Those reasons have been and quite probably will continue to be argued. Considering the aim of the original policy as well as TANF, the examination of more effective possibilities for addressing poverty in the United States should be considered. First and foremost, an understanding of the underlying causes of poverty must be addressed and understood before effective policy can be produced that will have an eliminatory effect. Until consensus can be reached on the underlying causes of poverty, effective policy regarding elimination of poverty will remain out of reach. While this work does not attempt to delve into the reasons behind the ineffectiveness of the policy or the underlying reasons for poverty in the U.S., it does provide for a look at the numbers regarding the War on Poverty’s offspring, TANF. Further policy study areas should be approached with an actual solution to poverty as opposed to the symptoms. While no policy can contend with all variables they can approach with a solution in mind rather than a temporary patch for the symptom of a deeper problem. Until a new approach is taken toward poverty elimination the poverty rate, as traditionally viewed, will remain within a consistent range.

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