

The state of America's welfare state

By: Congressman Tim Huelskamp

Nearly 47 million Americans are on food stamps. Almost half of all Americans are classified as low-income or poor. Only 63.6 percent of able-bodied adults are in the labor force, the smallest share in more than a generation. And of those in the market to work, 23 million Americans still can't find a full-time job in this the worst economic recovery since the Great Depression.

This explosion of poverty and joblessness is taking a toll on taxpayers -- and America's credit card bill.

According to the most recent data from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, 83 welfare programs cost taxpayers more than \$1 trillion in 2011. This was the single-largest expense on the books - more than Social Security, Medicare, and national defense.

Given that America borrows about 40 cents out of every dollar that means Washington borrowed more than \$400 billion for welfare programs.

A welfare entitlement, by definition, is a program whose benefits are guaranteed. So long as the beneficiary meets the qualifications, the money is spent. There are no caps on many of these programs. So, when the economy is weak - as it is now - the federal government has to pay out to everyone who qualifies.

No doubt there are times when people hit rough times. But, temporary support programs and big-government stimulus plans are not supposed to serve as permanent benefits. Unfortunately, because of the sustained dismal state of our economy many people have to rely on these benefits longer than they would like.

With President Obama in the White House and Harry Reid in control of the Senate we have been limited in the past two years with our efforts to not only improve the economy, but also to fix these programs.

Nonetheless, I have introduced bills to target and transform two major welfare programs.

The first, the State Health Flexibility Act, will copy the successful welfare reforms of the 1990s that not only helped many families to get out of poverty, but also helped to control costs. This legislation will convert Medicaid to a block grant program and put our governors and state-level officials - rather than Washington politicians and bureaucrats - in charge of the health care benefits of our most needy people.

The second, the State Nutrition Assistance Flexibility Act, will combine six food stamp and nutrition programs into a single block grant to the states. Just like education and transportation, we cannot expect all states to have the same needs. What Kansans require is different from what Californians and Minnesotans need. Furthermore, like other reforms of the 1990s, a work requirement will be instated for able-bodied adults.

But in addition to impacting our coffers, the explosion of people living in poverty is taking a toll on our culture. So many people have lost hope. No one wants to rely on government to feed their families and heat their homes. No one wants to climb down the economic ladder. And, the fact that Washington annually borrows hundreds of billions of dollars to fund a growing welfare state (rather than fix the economy to reduce dependency) says the worst about America's culture: today's leaders care more about political gains now than the legacy left for the next generation.

The measure of our nation's success should not be judged by how much borrowed money the government can hand out. No, the measure of our nation's success is by how few people have to rely on the government for assistance and ultimately how many people move up - not down the economic ladder. In the end, getting more people back to work is the best and most proven way to reduce poverty. By replacing welfare checks with a paycheck, we not only restore fiscal responsibility in Washington - we also can restore pride and personal responsibility in the American people.



I give Missi Schoen TWO THUMBS UP for her letter to the editor, Time to take another look. Emailed in.

Thumbs up to the school for bringing the football games on Channel 17 and to the sponsors of the radio for the games out of town. We people that aren't able to go really do appreciate it. Brought in.

Thumbs up to our Norton County EMS Department. We appreciate the service you provide to our community. Called in.

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Hurry up and don't be late

I just about forgot to turn my clock back an hour before I went to bed Saturday night. And Sunday morning I really did forget to tell Jim we had an extra hour to get ready for church. So I had to laugh when he came charging into the family room, where I was casually having some toast and milk. He said, "Look at the time! We have 15 minutes before we have to leave. You know how I hate to be late."

I said, "Don't worry. Calm down. It's the time change weekend."

He calmed down alright. He sat down, we got to watching the news and before we knew it our extra hour had evaporated. In the end, we still had to hurry to get ready on time.

-ob-

The last thing in this world I need is another cat. We have three and sometimes that is two too many. So when Jim called me outside and said to, "Hey, have you ever seen this cat before? Does he belong to somebody? Do you think he looks OK?" I should have had my defenses up.

Instead, I took a look. No, I had never seen it before. No, I didn't know if it belonged to somebody. And, no again. I didn't think it looked very good. That was just for starters. Now I would have been willing to feed it and let it visit,

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



but my husband is so crazy about cats he insisted I take it to be checked out.

It was late Saturday afternoon, but since we practically have the veterinarian on retainer, he said to bring our feline friend in. Sure enough; upper respiratory infection, malnourished and probably worms. Great. All this for a cat I don't know, and quite frankly, didn't want to know.

But gee, he is kinda cute. And he is awfully friendly. Isn't that cute how he puts his paw through the carrier cage, trying to reach my hand? Now, stop that! I don't want to like you. Too late. Jim has named him Thomas. Since I'm back listening to my "Learn Spanish" CDs I opted for Tomas.

Anyway, we're taking turns feeding him and administering his antibiotics. Mostly, he was ravenously hungry. We're trying to feed him small amounts at frequent intervals. He literally gobbles everything we put in front of

him. At the moment, he is isolated in the dining room. One of the female cats caught sight of him when we were setting up the cat hospital. Judging from the hissing and growling, Tomas is not going to get a warm reception if he does stay.

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During the praise portion of Sunday worship services, prayers for safe travel were requested for a lady member of the congregation. Her husband said, "Yeah, I hope they get home. They went to Denver, but I gave them a Utah map."

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By the time you read this the elections will be over. The sun will have come up and whether our candidate won or lost we will face the day. Life will go on; the world will not end.

This country of ours is so unique. We can keep our leaders or we can change them. All with the power of our vote - not the power of a sword. The transition of leadership will continue, uninterrupted. All very civil. All very American.

America is not perfect. It's made up of imperfect people. But it's still the best there is. God bless the U.S.A.

Hunting is a privilege not a right, be considerate

This weekend the hills, fields and woods will once again awaken to the sound of booming shotguns as hunters and their dogs swarm the countryside searching for pheasants, quail, ducks and other wildlife.

It goes without saying that Kansas farms and ranches have always been a handy, ready-to-use outlet for many urban dwellers in search of recreational hunting. On opening day of the upland game season the interstate and U.S. highways will be a steady stream of pickups, SUVs and cars headed for central and western Kansas.

If you're one of these hunters who plan to hunt on private land, remember one key word when your thoughts turn toward hunting. This word is consideration. Translated, this word means thoughtful and sympathetic regard.

In this country, wildlife belongs to the people, but landowners have the right to say who goes on their land. If you are interested in hunting, make arrangements before you hunt.

Don't wait until the day you plan to hunt someone's land and then pound on their door at 6 a.m. Once you've secured permission, here are some suggestions to follow that will ensure a lasting relationship between you and

the landowner.

Agree on who, and how many, will hunt on the land. Specify number and furnish names. Talk about specific times and dates you plan to hunt.

Phone each and every time before you plan to hunt, and let the landowner know your intentions. The landowner may have forgotten about your original conversation. It's just common courtesy to say hello before hunting and ask again for the opportunity - or privilege, as I consider it - to hunt on someone's property.

Determine exactly where on the land you have permission to hunt. Some areas may be off-limits because of livestock or crops.

Always, and I can't stress this enough, leave gates the way you find them. If they are open, leave them that way. If they are closed, shut them after you pass through.

If you ever leave a gate open and a farmer's cow herd gets out of the

Insight
John Schlageck



pasture, "Katie bar the door." You'll never be invited back to hunt.

Once you've enjoyed a successful hunt, stop by to thank the landowner for his generosity. Offer to share the game you bag.

After the season ends, write a note expressing your appreciation for the opportunity to hunt. You may also find out what the landowner and his/her family enjoys eating or drinking and drop by later with a gift.

Leasing of land by the hunter from the landowner is becoming more popular in Kansas. Such agreements allow hunters a guaranteed hunting site. It also provides the landowner income to recoup some of the investment he needs to leave habitat suitable for wildlife to survive and prosper.

If you enter into such a lease, make sure it is written and includes all provisions both parties deem necessary. This should include a clause for the landowner and his or her family to hunt on the land.

Remember that the hunter and landowner should always discuss the terms of the hunt before hunting begins. This is extremely important. And hunters, never forget you are a guest and it is a privilege to hunt on the owner's land.