

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

EARLY RESULTS OF WELFARE REFORM

HON. NEWT GINGRICH

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 3, 1997

Mr. GINGRICH. Mr. Speaker, even though it has been in effect for less than a month, the historic welfare reform bill passed by Congress and signed into law last year by the President has already yielded dramatic results. The February 11, 1997, Wall Street Journal details how one county in Oklahoma has seen its welfare caseload drop 30 percent in the last year. According to the Journal "The story is much the same in the rest of the United States."

The Journal details that just the news of changes in welfare have spurred recipients to changing behavior in numerous ways, including finishing education, reporting for training, and finding jobs. This story confirms what proponents of welfare reform long believed: The old system left people trapped and gave them no incentive to improve their lives. Reform has already given individuals a spark for real change.

I submit the full article into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

[From the Wall Street Journal, Feb. 11, 1997]

OKLAHOMA'S POOR GET THE MESSAGE, OPT OUT OF THE WELFARE SYSTEM

(By Dana Milbank)

SAPULPA, OKLA.—In the Oklahoma land grabs of a century ago, a few sneaky settlers grabbed old Indian territory for themselves before the law allowed, thus earning the nickname "Sooners." These days, thousands of Sooners are again jumping the gun, this time by denying themselves welfare benefits far ahead of the government cutoff.

Oklahoma's welfare rolls have declined by more than 30% since March of 1994. In Creek County, of which Sapulpa is the seat, the caseload fell 30% last year. The healthy economy accounts for much of the drop. But in Oklahoma and throughout much of the country, something else is happening: Poor people are "absolutely petrified," says Raydene Walker, who trains welfare recipients at her vocational school in Sapulpa. Talk of cutbacks, she says, "has put some fire behind them. Some who were absolutely resistant have come in and said, 'What am I going to do?'"

A NATIONWIDE REDUCTION

The story is much the same in the rest of the U.S. Nationally, the number of people on the core welfare program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, declined 18% from a peak of 14.4 million in March 1994 to 11.8 million in October 1996.

What makes these figures surprising is that the tough new federal welfare law—which mandates lifetime limits of five years for those on public assistance and a cutoff after two years for most of those who don't work—won't begin to jettison welfare recipients until late 1998. Oklahoma hasn't even passed a welfare law to comply with the new federal legislation. Creek County started a publicity campaign months ago to warn peo-

ple about possible changes. But it hadn't kicked any legitimate recipients off the rolls until last week, and that sanction was limited to one person, who had failed to seek job-training or contact prospective employers.

The growing economy can't explain the whole drop-off. The national caseload decline is the largest, in absolute numbers and on a percentage basis, since AFDC began six decades ago. More-powerful expansions than the current one have failed to produce the same level of caseload reductions.

"THE BIG MISCONCEPTION"

Because only a handful of states have been expelling welfare recipients, officials in many states point to another explanation: a fundamental change in the attitude of their clientele. Spurred by the welfare-reform debate, some recipients are finding work long before the law requires. Many prospective recipients aren't bothering to secure benefits in the first place, even when they qualify.

"The big misconception about welfare reform is that they are shutting down the welfare system, cutting everyone off," says Tanya Warner, a senior caseworker in Wilmington, Del. "People come in afraid this is the last public assistance check they will get." Peggy Torno, who runs the welfare program in Kansas City, Mo., says the message has sunk in: "Last week I went to our jobs center to find someone who did not know about the tougher laws. I couldn't find anyone who didn't know the law had changed."

Advocates for the poor worry that some people eligible for public assistance are being driven away by scare stories and false rumors. They also note that some recipients are forgoing promising training to look for work immediately—a step that may land them in dead-end jobs and short-circuit a long-term escape from poverty. But others in Oklahoma and elsewhere hail the change as evidence of social progress.

The changes came quickly to Creek County, a slice of the Bible Belt stretching southwest from Tulsa over 930 square miles. The county of 60,000 is mostly rural and, despite a relatively low unemployment rate of 4.2%, bears few outward signs of prosperity. According to 1994 estimates, the county's per capita income was \$15,075, compared with Oklahoma's \$17,610.

ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS

When it comes to welfare overhaul, Creek County has relied largely on the bully pulpit. In October 1995, caseworkers began telling all recipients to apply for jobs—usually eight to 10 a week—before they could apply for benefits. Recipients also were warned that time limits were on the way, but that was a bluff, because the limits didn't even become law for an additional 10 months. After the federal law passed, the state mailed letters to recipients warning that "if you refuse to participate in work activities. . . your case will be closed."

County officials summoned every welfare recipient for a one-on-one meeting about the new get-tough policy, including the likelihood of time limits. A large, handwritten sign was installed at the agency's reception desk. "Notice," it says, "AFDC applicants will be required to participate in job search immediately."

Local media joined the chorus. "The timer starts running Oct. 1 for welfare recipients,"

the Tulsa World warned last fall in a front-page story, referring to federal time limits on eligibility. "For welfare recipients in Oklahoma, the clock is ticking," echoed the Sapulpa Herald.

In the first two months after Creek County started its tough talk, the number of new applicants for AFDC dropped by about half. During the past 15 months, 45% of first-time AFDC applicants didn't return to the office after hearing about the new time limits and the local requirement for recipients to contact prospective employers while getting benefits.

Melinda Jones heard about the new federal law from her mother, who regularly watches the evening news. Since last year, the 39-year-old Ms. Jones, who cares for her two grandchildren, had discussed welfare reform with friends. She is scared.

"If I don't find a job, they cut you off," she says, snapping her finger. She thinks other benefits are doomed, too. "I heard by word of mouth they're just cutting out food stamps totally," she says. Even subsidies for day care, she hears, will be terminated.

Her fears, particularly those about child care and food stamps, are exaggerated. The children wouldn't lose food stamps even if Ms. Jones does, and the new law calls for increased spending on day care. But the talk had its effect: Ms. Jones, who has a fourth-grade education and failed twice to get a high school general equivalency diploma, or GED, has returned to training with new vigor.

The new attitudes quickly became evident in welfare offices. Rolls began shrinking so fast, "we wondered if we'd have a job," recalls Connie Turner, who interviews applicants. Wanda Watson, another interviewer, recalls handing an applicant a list of 10 employers he would have to apply to before receiving his check. "He stood up," uttered some epithets "and walked right out," she says.

THE RUMOR MILL

Welfare rumors, often unfounded, spread quickly among those in public housing in Creek County. "A lot of people I know have been cut off," government-housing resident Cheryl Bowman says. That statement wasn't accurate, for it was made before Feb. 1, when the county began culling its rolls of those who refused to apply for jobs. But Ms. Bowman stepped up her job training anyway and found work as a physical-therapy assistant. "I don't want to be stuck at McDonald's," she explains. She is due to leave the welfare roll in a month.

In a recent application session, welfare prospect Kim Nance seemed surprised as a county interviewer rattled off the new restrictions: the time limits mandated by Congress, and the county's requirement to apply for 10 jobs a week. "You begin tomorrow" looking for work, the caseworker orders. Ms. Nance responds repeatedly with "OK." But when the interviewer leaves, she is deflated. "It will be hard to get used to," Ms. Nance says. On the list of employers in her hand, she sees only two in her hometown. "Hopefully, I can get hired right there."

Ms. Nance did get a job with a nursing home in her town, one of the employers on the list. She called the welfare office to tell them about her job, and her case was never put on the roll.

Some advocates for the poor say that confusion over the new regulations has scared

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

off some who are eligible—and needy. But in Creek County, officials say, many of those, like Ms. Nance, disqualified themselves after finding jobs. Others already had “underground” jobs—baby-sitting, housecleaning, working a booth at the flea market—and may not have deserved benefits in the first place. Officials here figure as many as half of all recipients have such off-the-books jobs; the \$307 monthly payment for a parent of two children, after all, isn’t much to live on. “We’re discouraging the marginal, extra-money folks, a lot of those who didn’t need it,” says Wayne Thiltgen, a creek County caseworker.

As recipients’ attitudes are changing, so is the administrators’ thinking. Dee Anne Ruggs, who oversees the former AFDC program (now called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) for Creek County, even set up a “Super Bowl” competition to see which caseworker could get the most people into school, job-training programs or work. The winner, Mr. Thiltgen, got an ice-cream sundae.

“WHY WOULDN’T THEY BE SCARED?”

Though he says he doesn’t try to scare his clients, Mr. Thiltgen is aware of the underlying fear. “I’m using that to my advantage,” he says. “The idea in the community is that we’re going to kick everybody off.” Ironically, he says, some of those responsible for the panic are welfare activists who direly predict a wave of misery following reform. “Listening to these sound bites on the news, my God, why wouldn’t they be scared?” Mr. Thiltgen says of his clients.

Despite the declining rolls, Creek County still faces the challenge of hardcore cases, including those with multigenerational dependency, without education or addicted to drugs or alcohol. The new federal law allows 20% of the caseload to be exempt from time limits because of such problems, but that may not cover all the hard-luck cases.

Tarlina Turner, 31, knows about the new law. She was reared in a family on welfare, has received AFDC in her own right for the past 10 years, and lives with her diabetic mother and three children in a home that is little more than a shack beside a dirt road outside Bristow, Okla.

“Don’t mind the chicken poop,” she says, leading a visitor past the chickens, dog and cat on the porch and into her home, where tape plugs ceiling leaks. Her ailing mother needs to have her nearby, and Ms. Turner doesn’t have a car. Meanwhile, county officials support her claim that there is neither work nor public transportation nearby.

Ms. Turner has already come within days of being cut off, agreeing at the last minute to join a job-training program. “I better get up and get work; I don’t have a choice,” she says. But she has little confidence in her prospects.

Another unanswered question about the rapid caseload reduction is how many of those who have moved off welfare are working in secure jobs. If some of these former recipients can’t hold their jobs, the case reductions could prove temporary.

Even those working aren’t always confident. Karen Michael, on AFDC for two years, says she was “extremely worried” about the time limits and used the deadline to motivate herself to finish training as a licensed practical nurse. She now makes \$9.75 an hour as a nurse. Yet, faced with the loss of Medicaid, food stamps and child-care benefits because of her earned income, she finds herself only marginally better off than when she was on welfare.

Ms. Michael had to forgo plans to get her registered-nurse degree, which would allow her to earn more than \$20 an hour and perhaps leave poverty for good. If not for the

pressure of time limits, she says, she probably would still be in school. She would still be on welfare, but she might also have a better chance of staying off permanently. “The option,” she says, “was not there.”

SALUTING MONIQUE ALITA GREENWOOD

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 3, 1997

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to introduce my House colleague to Monique Alita Greenwood, a superb editor and entrepreneur in my congressional district.

Monique was the first editor-in-chief and publisher of color at Fairchild Publications, where she conceived Children’s Business, a monthly trade magazine. Her direct efforts greatly helped to open the doors of the modeling industry to children of color.

Since February 1996, she has served as the editorial style director of Essence magazine. During her tenure she has revamped the fashion pages, giving them more impact and making them more serviceable to Essence readers.

Monique is the owner of Akwaaba, a bed and breakfast mansion in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Her Afrocentric business opened in 1995, and it has been the subject of considerable press coverage.

A devoted mother and wife, Monique is a pillar of the community. She is married to Glen Pogue and they have a 5-year-old son, Glynn. Despite her hectic schedule, Monique is active in local organizations and is the cofounder and national president of a literary society of African-American women. She is a magna cum laude graduate of Howard University, and is a former recipient of a Points of Light Award from former President Bush.

RESERVE OFFICERS’ TRAINING CORPS FOR AMERICAN SAMOANS

HON. ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA

OF AMERICAN SAMOA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 3, 1997

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation which will afford U.S. nationals the opportunity to participate in Reserve Officers’ Training Corps scholarship programs.

Under current law, American Samoans born in American Samoa are considered U.S. nationals. These are persons who owe their allegiance to the United States, but are not U.S. citizens. Persons born in American Samoa are the only persons in the world who are given this status, as persons born on all other United States soil may become United States citizens by right of birth.

Also under current law, only U.S. citizens are authorized to enlist in the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps, or ROTC for short, scholarship programs, and only U.S. citizens are eligible to become military and naval officers.

The legislation I am introducing today would require U.S. national residents residing in a State of the United States and desiring to

apply for a ROTC scholarship program, to file an application to become a naturalized citizen within 60 days of being accepted into the program. The legislation would also require U.S. nationals who are not residents of a State of the United States, to become a resident of a State, and to file an application to become a naturalized citizen within 60 days of becoming a resident as defined in our immigration laws.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this legislation strikes a fair balance between two competing interests. On the one hand, it gives the residents of American Samoa the same opportunities to become military and naval officers as the residents of the States and the other territories. On the other hand, while keeping the requirement that all military and naval officers be U.S. citizens, it requires U.S. nationals to prove their willingness to serve our country in a timely manner, thereby ensuring that taxpayer dollars are not spent on someone who will later prove ineligible for service.

Mr. Speaker, I am submitting a copy of the legislation with my statement.

H.R. —

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. ELIGIBILITY OF UNITED STATES NATIONALS FOR ADVANCED TRAINING IN THE SENIOR RESERVE OFFICERS’ TRAINING CORPS.

Section 2104(b) of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by inserting “or national” after “citizen”;

(2) at the end of paragraph (6), by striking “and”;

(3) in paragraph (7), by striking the period and inserting “; and”; and

“(8) if he is a national but not a citizen of the United States, agree in writing that he will—

“(A) if he is not a resident of a State (within the meaning of chapter 2 of title III of the Immigration and Nationality Act; 8 U.S.C. 1421–1459), become a resident of a State (within such meaning) before commencing the program for advanced training; and

“(B) file an application for naturalization within 60 days after the later of—

“(i) the date that he meets the requirements for naturalization in section 316(a)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1436); or

“(ii) the date that he is accepted into the program for advanced training.”.

SEC. 2. ELIGIBILITY OF UNITED STATES NATIONALS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AS MEMBERS OF THE SENIOR RESERVE OFFICERS’ TRAINING CORPS.

(a) GENERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—Section 2107(b) of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by inserting “or national” after “citizen”;

(2) at the end of paragraph (4), by striking “and”;

(3) in paragraph (5), by striking the period and inserting “; and”; and

(4) by adding at the end the following:

“(6) if he is a national but not a citizen of the United States, agree in writing that he will—

“(A) if he is not a resident of a State (within the meaning of chapter 2 of title III of the Immigration and Nationality Act; 8 U.S.C. 1421–1459) become a resident of a State (within such meaning) before commencing the financial assistance program; and

“(B) file an application for naturalization within 60 days after the later of—

“(i) the date that he meets the requirements for naturalization in section 316(a)(1)