

Press Releases

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Sessions Comments On Congressional Report Showing Welfare Is Single Largest Federal Expense

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WASHINGTON—U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL), Ranking Member of the Senate Budget Committee, issued a statement today about a new report he requested from the Congressional Research Service (CRS) about federal welfare spending. The report reveals that total means-tested welfare spending is currently the single largest category of spending in the federal budget—more than Medicare, Social Security, and national defense. Including available data on state spending on federal welfare programs, the total amount spent on federal welfare stands at \$1.03 trillion. Yet the Administration continues controversial promotions to expand enrollment.

Sessions’ statement follows:

“These astounding figures demonstrate that United States spends more on federal welfare than any other program in the federal budget. It is time to restore—not retreat from—the moral principles of the 1996 welfare reform. Such reforms, combined with measures to promote growth, will help both the recipient and the Treasury.

The Administration ludicrously argues that every five dollars in food stamp spending results in nearly 10 dollars in economic benefit. They insist that communities ‘lose out’ when more people don’t sign up for benefits. They even awarded a recruitment worker for overcoming people’s ‘mountain pride.’ Is this a hopeful vision for the future? Do these priorities make our country stronger and our economy more secure?

No longer should we measure compassion by how much money the government spends on poverty but by how many people we help to rise out of poverty. Welfare assistance should be seen as temporary whenever possible, and the goal must be to help more of our fellow citizens attain gainful employment and financial independence. This is about more than rescuing our finances. It’s about creating a more optimistic future for millions of struggling Americans.”

BACKGROUND ON \$1.03 TRILLION IN SPENDING ON FEDERAL WELFARE:

Ranking Member Sessions and the minority staff of the Senate Budget Committee requested from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service (CRS) an overview of cumulative means-tested federal welfare spending in the United States in the most recent year for which data is available (fiscal year 2011). The results are staggering. CRS identified 83 overlapping federal welfare programs that together represented the single largest budget item in 2011—more than the nation spends on Social Security, Medicare, or national defense. The total amount spent on these 80-plus federal welfare programs amounts to roughly \$1.03 trillion. Importantly, these figures solely refer to means-tested welfare benefits. They exclude entitlement programs to which people contribute (e.g., Social Security and Medicare)... Spending on federal welfare programs is up 32 percent since 2008, and now comprises 21 percent of federal outlays.

To view additional information about the CRS report, including a list of all 83 programs and an examination of how spending has increased over time, please see a Budget Committee background document [here](#). To read CRS' report, please click [here](#). Examples of Administration efforts to expand welfare enrollment follow:

- A Spanish-language ad in which an individual is pressured into accepting food stamps even though she says her family is financially self-sufficient
- An assertion that communities are "losing out" when individuals choose not to participate in the food stamp program
- "Everyone wins when eligible people take advantage of benefits to which they are entitled"
- Recruitment workers given tips on how to "overcome the word 'No'"
- 2011 Hunger Champions award for "counteracting mountain pride"

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