

## Press Releases

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### Sessions: Welfare Reform Must Be Part Of Fiscal Reform

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WASHINGTON—U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL), Ranking Member of the Senate Budget Committee, issued the following statement today observing that “welfare—the largest budget item—has been largely exempt from discussions of fiscal reform”:

“Experts on both sides of the aisle agree that we need a bare minimum of \$4 trillion in deficit reduction over ten years. It will take much more than that to balance the budget, so \$4 trillion is a starting point. There is the potential to achieve one quarter of the \$4 trillion in ten-year savings through welfare reform. Based on data from the Congressional Research Service, we know that we are now spending more on means-tested federal welfare—such as food stamps, public housing, and cash aid—than on Medicare, Social Security, or defense. The nation spends enough on federal poverty programs to send every household beneath the poverty line a yearly check for \$60,000. CRS data also reveals that welfare spending is going to continue its dramatic rise: after increasing more than 30 percent over the last four years, means-tested federal aid is going to increase another 30 percent over the next four years. Federal spending alone on welfare and poverty programs—excluding state contributions to federal programs—will reach approximately \$1 trillion in 2016. Yet, amazingly, welfare—the largest budget item—has been largely exempt from discussions of fiscal reform. A modest reduction in growth, along with improved standards and work requirements, can produce substantial savings. This will help place mandatory spending overall on a more sustainable path while targeting resources to those in true need.

For instance, food stamp spending has more than quadrupled since 2000, increasing every single year without fail. That number is projected to remain permanently elevated—with the government estimated to spend nearly \$800 billion on food stamps alone over the next decade. Yet the program is untouched in the Budget Control Act. And, though enrollment has reached a record 47.1 million, the USDA is trying to further boost enrollment among those who say they do not need the benefit.

Congress must also look at how welfare reform can strengthen our immigration system. One of the bedrock legal principles of immigration is that those coming to America should not be reliant on federal assistance. That principle has been steadily eroded.

Sound, careful, compassionate reforms will help not only the Treasury but the recipient. Like the 1996 reform, welfare reform for the 21st century will help confront poverty, strengthen the family, and improve the outlook for millions of struggling Americans.”

NOTE: To view a Budget Committee chart illustrating that cumulative spending on means-tested aid in 2011, if converted to cash, was enough to send a check for \$60,000 to each household living beneath the federal poverty line, please [click here](#). For more information on USDA's controversial food stamp promotions, including its efforts to expand non-citizen enrollment, please [click here](#).

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