

NLWJC - Kagan

DPC - Box 036 - Folder 007

**POTUS Press Conference -
Q&A 4/11/97**

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM GENERAL

Question: **There are now 57 separate proposals for campaign finance reform. Isn't the legislation dead for this Congress?**

Answer: As has often been said, in Congress there are 535 "experts" on campaign reform. That's certainly true. But there is only one broad-based proposal that is supported by Democrats and Republicans – the legislation introduced by McCain and Feingold and by Shays and Meehan. I think that when the matter is proposed to Members of Congress, and they are forced to vote yes or no on this legislation, they will have a very hard time explaining to their constituents why they voted no. As for people who say "there won't be reform this year" – on an issue like this, popular sentiment can crystallize very quickly. Legislation that didn't look like it had a chance of passing, a month later, can be on its way to the President's desk. That's what happened, for example, on the lobbying reform legislation and the gift ban in 1995.

Question: **Some people say that the McCain-Feingold approach will require as much fundraising as today. Senators John Kerry, Paul Wellstone, and John Glenn have proposed legislation to provide complete public financing for congressional elections. If candidates accepted the public funding, they wouldn't be able to raise private money. What is your view of this approach?**

Answer: I believe that the basic test for campaign finance reform must be that it be comprehensive, that it be fair to both parties, that it level the playing fields, and that it curb the amount of money in elections. I welcome any effort that works to build consensus toward these goals. I believe that McCain Feingold – which doesn't have public financing, but instead gives candidates free TV time provided by broadcasters – is the most realistic way to achieve these goals. Of course, Sens. Kerry, Wellstone and Glenn also support McCain Feingold.

As for public financing, my 1993 campaign finance reform legislation provided partial public financing for congressional candidates; and I think that states who are experimenting with public funding should be able to do so. But we have a rare chance to enact broad and bipartisan reform – reform that does not include public funding – and we can't lose sight of that mission.

ADDITIONAL WELFARE Q&AS

Question: Having the federal government hire welfare recipients is all well and good, but what are you doing to fix the faults of the welfare bill, as you promised to do when you signed it last August?

Answer: I signed the welfare bill into law because it restores America's basic bargain of providing opportunity and demanding in return responsibility. The law also protects children by guaranteeing medical care and nutrition and by providing \$14 billion for child care.

The best evidence that welfare reform works is the fact that welfare rolls have declined 20 percent since I became President. The decline is in part due to the waivers I granted to 43 states to allow them to take the kinds of tough actions now allowed in the welfare law.

As I said when I signed the bill, I strongly oppose some of the budget cuts the Congressional leaders attached to the welfare reform bill, cuts that have nothing to do with welfare reform. My budget would correct these problems, restoring benefits to legal immigrants who become disabled after entering the U.S. and to children who are too young to naturalize. I would also put a real work requirement into the food stamp law which would help those who want to work but can't find jobs.

Question: You've released new numbers today showing the welfare caseloads declined by 2.8 million or 20 percent since you became President. If the welfare rolls have declined anyway, why did you need to sign the welfare bill?

Answer: The caseload reductions show why I signed the welfare law -- they're the best evidence that welfare reform works. As you know, my Administration granted welfare reform waivers to 43 states so they could impose tough work requirements and time limits and provide incentives that made work pay better than welfare. The caseload decline shows that these kinds of actions work. And now, governors no longer have to petition Washington to put them into effect. The welfare reform law imposes time limits and lets states design sanctions for those who don't work.

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

Question: **Gingrich and Armev have said that at the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning you should devote at least one-third of the discussion to the development of the brains of fetuses. Will you agree to do this?**

Answer: Brain development before birth is a relevant topic. In fact, one of the panelists at the conference has done extensive work in this area. It will surely be discussed at the conference.

Question: **Doesn't the new research that you are discussing at the Conference suggest that mothers should stay home with their children rather than return to work?**

Answer: No. The research suggests that we should support **all** parents, those who work outside the home and those who do not. What is most important is that children are surrounded by loving, nurturing caregivers who understand that the experiences our children have in their first few years of life are essential to development and learning.

Q&A
The Federal Government Plan to Hire Welfare Recipients

Question: How many welfare recipients is the Federal government committed to hiring?

Answer: To date, the Cabinet agencies estimate they can directly hire into the Federal government 8,000 welfare recipients during the first two years of this program. And some agencies have already committed to hiring at least 2,000 more over the next two years bringing the initial total to 10,000. Further, most agencies will be encouraging their grantees and contractors to hire welfare recipients.

Question: Hiring a total of 10,000 welfare recipients over four years seems ambitious. Are these figures realistic?

Answer: This is an ambitious plan and it is a testament to the leadership and creativity of this Administration. However, you must remember that these numbers are preliminary estimates and may go up or down depending on future budgets as well as the success of agency outreach and retention plans, and other factors such as the strength of the economy.

Question: These numbers seem modest given the enormity of the problem. Why are they so skimpy?

Answer: Actually, these numbers represent what is essentially the Federal government's fair share of the effort to hire welfare recipients. The Federal government is approximately 1.5 percent of the nation's workforce. To meet its portion of the President's challenge to move 2 million people off of welfare by the year 2000-- which amounts to moving about 700,000 adults into the workforce -- the Federal government ought to hire about 10,000 welfare recipients. As you can see on the chart we've handed out, the Federal government has committed to hiring close to 8,000 welfare recipients in the first two years, and we fully expect that number to grow once agencies complete more surveying and have their programs fully operational.

Question: What sort of hires are included in the 10,000 figure?

Answer: All agencies have surveyed their existing hiring capacity and have reported available entry-level positions through all existing hiring capacities including the Worker-Trainee program the President encouraged them to use. The 10,000 number refers *only* to those who would be hired *directly* by the Federal government. Additionally, many of the agencies will be encouraging their grantees and contractors to hire welfare recipients, thereby further increasing the

number of recipients likely to be hired.

Question: What are the common elements of each plan?

Answer: While every agency plan is different, most plans address the following elements: Agency hiring capacity and available resources; plans for outreach to potential employees both within the Federal government and in the private for-profit and nonprofit sectors through government contractors and grantees; job preparation including formal training, job readiness and education; and plans to retain employees once hired including addressing child care and transportation issues, as well as using existing Employee Assistance Programs and creating mentoring or buddy programs to address personal issues that may arise.

Question: How are you going to hire welfare recipients at a time government is downsizing and budgets are tough?

Answer: It is true that the government has been downsizing. Since the President took office, he has actually shrunk the Federal government to its smallest size in three decades. However, downsizing does not mean that there are no jobs to fill. As in any organization, there is a natural amount of turnover in jobs at all levels. The Federal agencies have surveyed *current* vacancies and have committed to reaching out specifically to the welfare population to fill those positions.

Question: How many Federal employees are there and what percentage of the workforce does that represent?

Answer: There are 1.9 million Federal employees that account for 1.5% of the nation's workforce.

Question: How much will this effort cost?

Answer: This effort should not cost anything. All personnel offices conduct recruitment and outreach as part of their normal activities and build in these necessary activities as part of their normal budgets. Essentially, we are expecting agencies to carry this out within their existing budgets.

Question: Will agencies be hiring only in Washington, D.C.?

Answer: No. We're talking about jobs all over the country. More than 85 percent of federal jobs are located outside the Washington metropolitan area.

Question: The White House has over 1,500 employees. Why is the White House hiring only six recipients?

Answer: While this number might sound small, it is actually comparable to other agency hiring targets when compared to the percentage of each agency's workforce. For example, the Department of Transportation has committed to hiring 206 welfare recipients, the GSA 65 and DoD 1,605--but each is hiring approximately the same percent of its total Federal employees.

Further, the White House is ready to hire six welfare recipients now. Once the White House program is in place and the initial six are hired, we expect to continue to hire more over the coming years.

Question: In which departments will the White House place the first six welfare recipients?

Answer: One of the first welfare recipients will be placed in the Domestic Policy Council, the agency primarily responsible for welfare reform. Others will be placed through the Executive Office of the President.

Question: Aren't you favoring welfare recipients over everyone else?

Answer: We are not creating any preference such as the one that exists for veterans. We are encouraging the departments to use an existing hiring authorities, including programs that allow departments to cut through red tape and hire entry-level workers quickly and easily. We are also encouraging outreach efforts. This is the same commitment that the President has asked of the private sector.

Question: Why are we specifically helping welfare recipients rather than other poor people?

Answer: We make no apologies about the fact that we are asking the agencies to hire needy single mothers with children. These are the people whom it is most crucial to reach and put on the track of work. We want to help these families move from dependence on welfare to independence through self-sufficiency.

Question: Now that the agencies have turned in their plans, what are the next steps?

Answer: Agencies will begin working right away to fill available jobs by reaching out to welfare recipients to notify them of those jobs, and to fully use the existing programs to help recipients take *and keep* the jobs.

Question: Why did it take the Administration so long to get its hiring program off the ground?

Answer: The Federal hiring process has lots of complex rules and regulations and it took some time to figure out the best ways for agencies to hire entry-level people quickly and easily. We are thrilled that so many of the agencies presented us with

creative and ambitious plans that show their commitment and leadership to the pressing issue of moving welfare recipients permanently into the workforce.

Question: Does the President think federal government hiring is the way to reform welfare?

Answer: The Federal government's role is an important one, but it is only part of the formula for success. The President wants the Federal government to do exactly what he has asked the private sector to do -- help meet his challenge to move 2 million people off the welfare rolls by the year 2000, and to *continue* to move recipients into work thereafter. The President is extremely pleased that all of his Cabinet Secretaries and other agency and department heads have response so enthusiastically.

Question: What can you tell me about the meeting the President is planning with business leaders in May?

Answer: As you know, the President has met several times with key business leaders to discuss their role in making welfare reform a success. Most recently, the President met with 14 CEOs of major corporations, each of whom pledged to become involved in this effort. Now, this May, the President will again meet with many of those CEOs as well as 25 additional CEOs to talk about their specific commitments to the welfare to work effort.

Question: Nearly half of the total hiring figures you've cited for all Cabinet agencies come from the Department of Commerce's commitment to hire 4,000 people to help with the Census. Don't these temporary hires artificially inflate your numbers?

Answer: We are extremely pleased that the Department of Commerce has committed to hiring so many people over the next four years to do work on the 2000 Census. Most of these jobs will last up to six months while some will last up to one year. There will also be options for some of the individuals to be converted to permanent employment. However, as you know, every job is significant because whether it is short term or long term, a job offers a welfare recipient valuable work experience and on-the-job training that can help her achieve permanency in the labor market. Further, even without the Census numbers, the Cabinet Secretaries' numbers are extremely significant and only represent a start. Once agency programs are up and running, we will likely see the numbers continue to rise.

Additional Welfare Q&As

4/10/97

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