

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

60-Year Anniversary of the War on Poverty – *Are We Winning or Losing?*

On January 8, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson declared before Congress an “unconditional war on poverty in America.”

President Johnson [stated](#), “It will not be a short or easy struggle, no single weapon or strategy will suffice, but we shall not rest until that war is won. The richest Nation on earth can afford to win it. We cannot afford to lose it.”

Unfortunately, according to a recent *National Review* article, big government strategies for poverty reduction have been unsuccessful at winning this war and have come at the cost of trillions of dollars. Today, poverty remains one of the most significant—and costly—problems in America.



WORD ON THE STREET



Via [National Review](#):

- “Six decades later, the nation has made tremendous strides... Yet we have not won the war. Success has come almost entirely from government transfer payments to poor households, not from improvements in the foundational aspects of a flourishing life.”
- “The foundation of a thriving life reflects our collective values, such as getting an education, working hard, and raising a family. However, many of our safety-net policies do not align with these objectives. **Our safety-net programs [disincentivize work and marriage](#), and many low-income children still cannot [access](#) quality education due to our government’s policies.**”
- “Unsurprisingly, this approach set the federal government on a disastrous fiscal path. **Federal expenditures on means-tested programs have increased [eightfold](#) since the War on Poverty started, equating to an additional \$800 billion per year in today’s dollars.**”



- “The vision outlined by President Johnson in his War on Poverty declaration 60 years ago today remains unfulfilled. Winning that war requires safety-net policies that align with the foundational principles essential for a flourishing life — education, employment, and marriage.”

BIG PICTURE

The federal government operates **nearly 100 interrelated welfare programs**, [spread across](#) 14 government departments and agencies, and nine budget functions.

Federal welfare spending costs taxpayers **more than \$1 trillion each year**. Over the next decade, the federal government is projected to spend more than \$12 trillion on welfare programs. This sum of aggregate spending doesn't include the [billions of dollars in state government contributions](#) to federal welfare programs.

Despite this massive government investment, as of 2022, [37.9 million people](#) were living in **poverty**. Welfare enrollment in 2022 was even higher in many programs than at the height of the pandemic and government lockdowns in 2020. As enrollment has grown, welfare spending has skyrocketed. Outlays for welfare programs have grown significantly even in inflation adjusted terms.

As Democrats' rampant spending causes our [\\$34 trillion national debt](#) to soar, it is even more vital to ensure these funds are being used effectively and efficiently.

THE BOTTOM LINE

President Johnson [said](#) before Congress that the “chief weapons” in the War on Poverty would be “better schools, and better health, and better homes, and better training, and better job opportunities to help more Americans.”

Since taking office, however, President Biden has enacted policies that paid people more to stay home than to return to their jobs and waived work requirements for able-bodied adults. Across the nation, reading and math scores are at their lowest levels in decades. These policy failures risk trapping a whole new generation of Americans in poverty and government dependence.

Unlike President Biden, House Republicans are committed to enacting policies that promote temporary assistance and ultimately opportunity—the original goals of the War on Poverty. As President Johnson [said](#), “Our aim is not only to relieve the symptom of poverty, but to cure it and, above all, to prevent it.”

