



Former NYC Welfare Chief: Collect Immigrant Welfare Monies From Sponsors

By John Morgan

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Robert Doar, who oversaw a 25 percent reduction in New York City's welfare caseload and the transition to work for many recipients, says the United States is following the wrong path when it comes to immigrants who end up on public assistance.

The [American Enterprise Institute](#), where Doar is now a senior fellow, noted his research shows more than 25 percent of welfare and food stamp recipients, and more than 35 percent of Medicaid recipients, are non-citizens or the children of non-citizens.

Doar, head of New York's Human Resources Administration under former Mayor Michael Bloomberg, said under federal law, legal non-citizens require sponsors who agree to repay the benefit costs of their charges, and the government should start collecting those monies.

“In New York City we decided to do what the law required, even if our state and federal oversight agencies weren't interested. Not only did we feel obligated to pursue recovery, but we also felt the sponsors themselves who signed a form clearly stating that this was an expectation would want their government to enforce the requirement.

“We even instituted a good faith exception so that if the sponsor could show that they themselves were too poor to comply, they could be excused. But many of the people we wrote to and asked to reimburse us for the assistance, complied without us having to do anything more than ask.”

Doar said a recent General Accounting Office report concluded no states are complying with the requirement that the sponsors of legal immigrants reimburse the government for benefit costs, in part because of the absence of clear federal guidance.

“I love that our country is a nation of immigrants. And I believe strongly that we should be more welcoming of newcomers to America. But people should not come to America to get on welfare and if we have a program which requires a sponsor in the citizenship process and that clearly states the responsibilities of the sponsor, we should enforce that requirement.”

[The Niagara Falls Reporter](#) said last week that the average welfare recipient in New York

makes more money than the average worker in the state.

A full package of welfare benefits in New York state is worth \$38,004 per year, the seventh highest offered by the 50 states and the District of Columbia, according to the Cato Institute, the newspaper said.

Cato estimated the average welfare package in New York is the "pre-tax equivalent" of \$41,251 per year, which is 110 percent of the actual statewide median salary of \$39,562.