



Thursday August 22, 2013

## **Working for a living pays less than welfare**

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- As a great nation, the United States set out to eliminate human misery in the 1960s. But after 50 years and trillions of dollars, poverty seems to be winning the War on Poverty.

One reason is that welfare programs remove the incentive to find and keep a job.

While a job is the best way out of poverty, for some, welfare pays better, according to a study by the conservative Cato Institute.

Asked which of eight reasons was most responsible for the continuing problem of poverty, 24 percent said "too much government welfare that prevents initiative," in a survey by NBC and the Wall Street Journal in June.

That was the top answer. Only 4 percent said too little funding.

The fact is, the government is very generous when it comes to taking care of the poor.

In West Virginia and 34 other states, welfare programs pay more than minimum wage, the Cato study found.

Why bother working? Between food stamps, welfare, Medicaid and other programs, living on the dole is the equivalent of earning \$11.97 an hour.

The institute broke that down to annual benefits in West Virginia average:

- \* \$8,070 for housing.
- \* \$7,742 for Medicaid.
- \* \$6,312 for food stamps.
- \* \$4,080 for welfare.
- \* \$1,056 for Women, Infants and Children benefits.

\* \$467 for other programs.

That is a grand total of \$27,727 a year in benefits for not working.

Welfare is a valuable safety net intended to provide temporary aid to people who find themselves down on their luck. Americans support that.

However, welfare is economically toxic in the long run. Cato found only 2.6 percent of full-time workers live below the federal poverty line, while 23.9 percent of the unemployed do.

The nation spends hundreds of billions of borrowed dollars to finance a war that in the long-term promotes poverty and dependence. Perhaps it is time for a new strategy.