

## **EDITORIAL: Guess who's winning the war on poverty**

08/30/2013

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 an updated study by the conservative Cato Institute.

The study documents what will be a surprise to almost nobody.

Asked which of eight reasons was most responsible for the continuing problem of poverty, 24 percent of respondents to an NBC/Wall Street Journal survey earlier this summer said "too much government welfare that prevents initiative."

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 Pennsylvania and 34 other states, welfare programs in aggregate pay more than minimum wage, the Cato study found. A lot more.

Why bother working? Between food stamps, welfare, Medicaid and other programs, living on the dole in Pennsylvania is the equivalent of earning \$14.34 an hour - nearly double the minimum wage of \$7.25.

According to the Cato study, annual benefits in Pennsylvania average:

- \$8,947 for housing.
- \$8,100 for Medicaid.
- \$6,164 for food stamps.
- \$4,836 for welfare.
- \$1,184 for Women, Infants and Children benefits.
- \$300 for emergency food assistance.

- \$286 for heat and energy assistance.

That is a grand total of \$29,817 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 run promotes poverty and dependence. Perhaps it is time for a new strategy.