

Let them eat cake: The challenges of living on welfare

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September 15, 2014

It is well-known that liberals love big government because it hands them free stuff. Free stuff, like T-shirts during O-week, the T Downtown or lunch at Pittsburgh Public Schools is always great, but living off free stuff is even better. Unfortunately, like in all occupations, living off welfare isn't all fun and games. Here are five cons to living the dream on a big government's dime:

1. It takes a lot of work to apply. Unfortunately, receiving government aid isn't as easy as Republican politicians promise. Each of the various government programs have different qualifications, all of which federal, state or local governments set. Worst of all, traditional welfare, known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), actually requires you to work an outside job to receive aid. Filling out multiple forms for multiple agencies might not seem like a chore, but the process does take up valuable time. People applying for Medicaid, for instance, usually receive a government determination regarding whether or not they are eligible in about 30 days. Also, if you have disabilities, you should expect the process to take up to 90 days — time you could spend lazing around in your pile of free money.
2. It has a negative image. Much like practicing law, the profession of receiving money from the government carries a negative stigma. In fact, a 2011 [poll](#) conducted by Rasmussen found that 62 percent of Americans would prefer state-sponsored, minimum-wage jobs as an alternative to welfare — receiving money directly from the government without working for it just doesn't seem to garner any respect from the American people. And it is doubtful that this stigma will go away anytime soon, even with a [record](#) 20 percent of households on food stamps in 2013. Taking welfare is seen as irredeemable because, as everyone knows, hard work can get you out of any situation. Twenty percent of households must have just realized that hard work is just that — really hard. The actual people who work hard are those in the one percent — suckers.
3. There is little job security. A major downside of living off welfare is that Congress has the ability to cut payments altogether or, more likely, to change the requirements, duration or amount. Thus, living off welfare doesn't secure your peace of mind. Sure, you are getting free money, but it isn't a stable supply of free money. Admittedly, the government takes forever to do anything, and the last comprehensive reform was in 1996, but the threat is always there. A lifetime on welfare is definitely hard to plan.

4. The pay isn't great. Surprisingly, it is hard to live even a middle-class lifestyle on welfare. If you have the foresight to fulfill all the qualifications for the eight biggest government assistance programs, then, according to a Cato Institute [study](#), you can make more than you would working a full-time, minimum-wage job. But, for most practitioners in the art of welfare, this is simply out of reach. Most simply don't have the capabilities to do so while being a single mother with two children. Therefore, the family must subsist only on one or two of these programs. For example, the average benefit of food stamps per person, per month, was [\\$133.07](#) in 2013 — around a ninth of what one would make working full time at minimum wage, even before the additional money from tax credits. The key around this obstacle is children — the more you have, the more welfare you are eligible for under most programs. Of course, some would say that children are actually a lot of work to raise, but it's all about how much you put into it.

5. You are often bored. The worst part of being on welfare is the amount of free time you will have. When done properly, a professional welfare receiver should have large blocks of time filled with only the occasional quieting of one of your screaming babies. Sure, some find a life constantly filled with worrying about money as “stressful.” Some people even supposedly spend their time working to improve their lives, but, obviously, having made welfare your career, professional development and looking for a job is all passé. While reality TV does provide an outlet, there is only so much one can take. If you choose receiving welfare as a career, boredom is unfortunately part of the package.

Keeping these downsides in mind, I hope you now realize that living off welfare isn't for everyone. To deal with the hardships of this profession, one must have a dedication to being lazy, be too timid to engage in crime or simply be so poor that you have no other option. As you continue your college career, I hope you have many experiences that will help determine if living off welfare is right for you.