

Progressive and liberal solutions bad for poverty

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Despite finishing near the bottom in nearly every economic category, New Mexico's politicians never seem to pay the price at the polls. Whether it is economic well-being, food security or education outcomes, you will consistently find the Land of Enchantment at the bottom of the national list. While there are many factors to consider, one must start with those who make the policy and spend the money. With a two-year exception of House control, New Mexico Democrats have controlled the entire Legislature for six decades, and progressives are attempting to control the Democrats' agenda. Misguided progressive solutions are the reason we never find solutions to our ills.

A 2013 Cato Institute study showed a New Mexico family can qualify for \$30,435 in state and federal anti-poverty programs. It ranked New Mexico 18th in the nation in total dollar value of available welfare benefits. These large benefits can and do remove the incentive to work.

Kerry Jackson of the Pacific Research Institute has written extensively on California's boundless welfare expenditures, which are the highest in the nation. One out of five California residents is now classified as poor. Jackson points out while California has 12 percent of the U.S. population, it hosts one-third of our nation's welfare recipients. Beneficiaries simply have flocked to the unrestricted money doled out by indulgent programs that never address the root causes of poverty. California is close to bankruptcy, but its liberal progressive politicians continue to be elected by those they feed. Are our politicians building a dependent population segment to gain their votes?

Democratic and Republican politicians here should take heed to avoid progressive solutions that do not work. Dependency politics sounds like a good idea for a voter registration drive, but it does not inspire the potential voter to strive toward achieving the American dream.

Government agencies seem always to want to expand their customer bases. With few exceptions, the culture of such agencies is to spend all available money in order to have more money budgeted for the following year. Yet, anti-poverty programs should be designed to decrease in size through moving a recipient from welfare to independence.

In 1996 the Clinton Administration passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. While not perfect, it did dramatically reduce the welfare rolls and provide job training with a work requirement. Wisconsin followed suit the next year and has reduced its

unemployment rate to 3 percent, the lowest in the nation. New Mexico's unemployment rate is 6.1 percent which does not include those who have quit looking for a job. For a New Mexico family of four, 20.4 percent live below the poverty line of \$24,250 per year. The national average is 14.3 percent. Our child poverty rate is 28.6 percent. The national average is 21 percent.

To enhance Wisconsin's success, Gov. Scott Walker, R-Wis., recently proposed increasing the job training or work requirement from 20 to 30 hours per week, required drug testing and a fraud reducing photo ID requirement for food assistance recipients.

Anti-poverty programs are important and do help families in need. Their reform from ineffective progressive thinking is just a part of the answer. We also need an economic agenda in New Mexico that helps people and businesses succeed by removing regulatory barriers that obstruct work, increase the cost of doing business and raise consumer prices. Doing this would increase the number of jobs available in New Mexico. It also would assist in moving welfare recipients from dependency to independence.

With many regulations removed, our national economy is recovering well. Will New Mexico's politicians also move to find solutions to our economic and welfare problems?