



## Despite massive spending, war on poverty a 'failure,' report says

By Thomas Betar, ksl.com Contributor

SALT LAKE CITY — The war on poverty is being lost, according to some, despite the United States government spending nearly \$1 trillion every year to combat the growing problem.

"Fifteen trillion dollars: That's how much American taxpayers have forked over in the name of helping the poor since 1964," reported [The New American](#). "And what do we have to show for it? A poverty rate that has barely budged, an entrenched bureaucracy, and a population — like that of Greece and Portugal, two welfare- state basket cases — increasingly dependent on government handouts."

The New American cited a recent [Cato Institute report](#) by Michael Tanner, which advances the claim that despite all the efforts and spending, the current war on poverty is ultimately failing.

"Clearly we are doing something wrong," Tanner writes in the executive summary of the report. "Throwing money at the problem has neither reduced poverty nor made the poor self-sufficient. It is time to reevaluate our approach to fighting poverty. We should focus less on making poverty more comfortable and more on creating the prosperity that will get people out of poverty."

The poverty rate has risen to 15.1 percent of Americans, despite the mass amount of government funding and attention.

"This year the federal government will spend more than \$668 billion on at least 126 different programs to fight poverty," according to the Cato report. "And that does not even begin to count welfare spending by state and local governments, which adds \$284 billion to that figure. In total, the United States spends nearly \$1 trillion every year to fight poverty."

The disturbing trend of rising extreme poverty levels has many concerned as well.

"The unambiguous statistical trend since 2000 has been large increases in the fraction of Americans at the extreme end of poverty, with little to no change in the fraction of Americans considered 'near poor,'" writes Evan Soltas in a [recent blog post](#). "The poor, in other words, are getting poorer — or more precisely, poverty in America is becoming an increasingly extreme and unequal phenomenon."

Some are saying the statistics can be misleading, however, and that the efforts to curb poverty may be more effective than most think.

"When you look at the poverty statistics for France, Sweden, the UK, Canada, wherever in fact, what is being measured is how many people are still below the poverty line after whatever it is that we do to reduce poverty", writes Tim Worstall in [a recent Forbes article](#). "This is not true in the U.S.: By and large in the U.S. we measure poverty before all of the things that we do to alleviate poverty."

Whatever the case, poverty in the United States remains a pressing issue going forward, and some feel it may be time to overhaul efforts in this trillion-dollar war.

"Shouldn't we judge the success of our efforts to end poverty not by how much charity we provide to the poor but by how few people need such charity?" Tanner concludes in the Cato report. "By that measure, our current \$1 trillion War on Poverty is a failure."