

# Orlando Sentinel

## **Did U.S. lose the War on Poverty? Front Burner**

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In declaring "unconditional war on poverty in America," President Lyndon Johnson in his State of the Union address 50 years ago this month issued the nation its marching orders:

"For the war against poverty will not be won here in Washington. It must be won in the field, in every private home, in every public office, from the courthouse to the White [House](#)."

Yet, America's commander in chief realized that defeating a poverty [rate](#) that had by 1965 climbed to 18 percent would not "be a short or easy struggle"; nor would a "single weapon or strategy will suffice, but we shall not rest until that war is won. The richest nation on Earth can afford to win it. We cannot afford to lose it," he declared.

Yet, lose it we did, or so say critics such as Michael D. Tanner, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. Tanner argues trillions sunk into anti-poverty programs never dropped the poverty rate below 10.5 percent. That's evidence, he says, that "we have been doing something wrong."

Not everyone views the results after five decades as that cut-and-dried. While not declaring the effort an outright failure, one of today's Front Burner columnists views the War on Poverty as a disappointing mixed bag, at best.

Others see the fruits of Johnson's war. Because of the coordinated campaign, supporters say that fewer Americans are trapped in poverty's trench. Today's other Front Burner columnist, for instance, applauds the victories and calls for renewed vigor in taking the stubborn hill of need.