



Nearly 1 in 7 Americans is Impoverished

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Barbie Izquierdo is a single mom. She has lived her whole life at or near the poverty level, and her children - ages 4 and 6 - have suffered.

“It was hard trying to put them to bed or force them to go to bed without eating as much as they wanted to just because I was trying to save up for the next day, and many times it meant going to bed with nothing to eat myself, just so they could have something to eat.”

The U.S. Census Bureau Tuesday released a comprehensive report on poverty and income in the U.S. It shows Izquierdo's family is among the 46.5 million people who last year were living at or below the poverty line - that's \$23,550 for a family of four. Those new census figures released for 2012 show no significant changes from the year before. Census researchers say the U.S. is still trying to recover from 2007, the year before the recession.

Changing Government

Michael Tanner is with the conservative CATO Institute. He says it points to an inept government.

“We are spending close to \$1 trillion every year at the fed and state level on anti-poverty programs and yet we've had minimal effectiveness at reducing poverty. It would suggest that we aren't being as good as we can, and maybe we should look at different solutions.”

Income Figures

Census figures show the median household income in the United States last year was just over \$51,000. David Johnson is the chief of the Census Bureau's Social, Economic and Housing Statistics Division.

“Since 2007, the year before the most recent recession, median household income has declined 8.3 percent and was 9 percent below its all-time high achieved in 1999.”

Breakdown by Ethnicity

Johnson says Asian households have the highest income among ethnic groups at 68,000. Hispanics and blacks make about half that much. Johnson says those figures aren't much different from last year's and show the country hasn't recovered from pre-recession levels.

Food Stamps Threatened

Izquierdo says what pulled her out of her worst poverty were food stamps, now called the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance) Program. Congress is considering cutting \$40 billion over 10 years from SNAP, to cut excess and abuse through stricter eligibility requirements.

Bob Aiken is president and chief executive officer of Feeding America, a domestic hunger relief organization.

"That means 1.5 billion meals will be lost each year for hungry families for the next 10 years."

But Cato's Tanner says Washington says the program can't keep growing.

"We've gone from 17 million people receiving food in 2000 - to just over a decade later - we have 48 million people on food stamps. Yet, the evidence is not there that we are doing a particularly good job of reducing hunger or increasing nutritional value."

Izquierdo says that for the richest country in the world.....assistance should start at on its own shores.

"If we want to set a good example as a strong country, we need to make sure that our foundation is strong. And our foundation can't be strong if our children aren't getting enough to eat, because those are our next leaders."