



Washington Post gives Grothman 'Two Pinocchios' on single parent comments

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He hasn't yet been sworn into Congress, but U.S. Rep.-elect Glenn Grothman, R- Campbellsport, is back in [national headlines](#) for comments made recently about single parents.

The Washington Post's Fact Checker column [rated statements made by Grothman about welfare and single parents with "Two Pinocchios."](#) That's on a scale of one to four Pinocchios. Statements of 100 percent truth get the "Geppetto Checkmark."

The Republican [said during a Nov. 30 appearance on "Upfront with Mike Gousha"](#) that the government bribes single parents to remain unemployed and unmarried.

"So your viewers are aware, a single parent with a couple kids can easily get \$35,000 a year in total benefits between the health care and the earned income credit and the FoodShare and the low-income housing and what have you," Grothman said on the show. "And that's after taxes. How many people make \$35,000 a year after taxes? Most people don't.

"When you look at that amount of money, which is in essence a bribe not to work that hard or a bribe not to marry someone with a full-time job, people immediately realize you have a problem. Then as soon as you realize you have a problem and something has to be done, then you look at the generosity of the benefits and see what you can do to pare them back."

Asked whether "bribe" was too strong a word, Grothman said it's a "strong incentive not to raise children in wedlock."

The Fact Checker interviewed Grothman to assess his claim that welfare recipients receive \$35,000 in benefits per year.

Grothman's argument was based on an analysis he requested from the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau, examining the value of public assistance, student financial aid and tax credits to two hypothetical families with children.

In its assessment, the Fact Checker looked at a [Cato Institute study of the total level of welfare benefits in each state](#). The report showed that the value of public assistance benefits in Wisconsin had declined 18 percent since 1995, to \$21,483 in 2013 dollars.

"The Cato Institute notes there are 126 separate federal programs available for low-income individuals," the Fact Checker assessment reads. "There are even more options when state programs and non-means-tested programs are added. It's easy to pick and choose what would make up a person's 'welfare package,' and tack a number to it. This is essentially what Grothman did with the Wisconsin report."

It would be difficult to determine how many single parents in Wisconsin fit within the parameters Grothman set when he requested the LFB analysis, the Fact Checker noted.

"Grothman's statement in the interview lacks context, especially given the numerous caveats involved," the Fact Checker concludes. "His portrayal of a single parent 'easily' receiving \$35,000 is not accurate in a national context, since that would apply to only one in five cases, based on the Cato report."

Welfare reform was named as Grothman's [top priority during his congressional campaign](#). Educating the public is the first step, he said on Gousha's show.

It's not the first time the firebrand lawmaker's comments about single parents have invited [national scrutiny](#). In 2012, as a state senator, Grothman [introduced a bill](#) that would have required the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board to emphasize single parenting as a risk factor for child abuse and neglect. The bill did not pass.

Grothman told Gousha he thinks he can make a "little dent" on welfare reform while President Barack Obama is in office.

He [said](#) he plans to be a "constructive conservative" in Washington: "One of the more conservative people up there, particularly when it comes to government spending, certainly when it comes to welfare. But on the other hand, not somebody who votes 'no' for the thrill of voting 'no.' I expect to get a lot done."

Grothman will appear on MSNBC's "The Ed Show" with polar-opposite Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Madison, at 4:30 p.m. Friday.