

JEZEBEL

Congressman: Welfare Is a 'Bribe to Not Work That Hard' or Get Married

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Newest Wisconsin congressman Glenn Grothman hasn't even taken his seat yet, but the 59-year-old Tea Party enthusiast has already set his sights on the Badger State's greatest scourge: low-income people who receive modest state and federal benefits. Grothman recently told a local news host that aid programs are "a bribe not to work that hard."

"Your viewers are aware, a single parent with a couple kids can easily get \$35,000 in total benefits, between the healthcare and the earned income credit and the food share and the low-income housing and what have you," Grothman [told WISN's Mike Gousha](#). "When you look at such a large amount — 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 somebody with a full-time job, people immediately realize you have a problem."

[The Huffington Post's Amanda Terkel points out](#) that Grothman appears to be getting that \$35,000 number from a study from the libertarian Cato institute, a study which calls welfare "[a better deal than work](#)," calculating the hypothetical benefits a single mother of two might receive from seven different federal aid programs.

But the study, as Terkel notes, has been criticized by the liberal [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#), who write that it has two enormous flaws: it presumes that this hypothetical Lazy Single Mom/Welfare Queen Boogieman Who Hides Under the Beds of Tea Party Congressmen would receive benefits from all seven programs, which most people do not. And it presumes that people either work or receive aid, not both. In fact, the CBPP writes, the programs are largely set up to benefit people who are employed: "Contrary to Cato's assertions, these programs now do much more to promote work and support low-income working families — and *much less* to help poor families in which parents are out of work (leading to rising numbers of very poor children)."

But facts are no roadblock for Grothman, who's had cutting welfare programs on his to-do list for a very long time. He's written that food stamp programs "[encourage sloth](#)," as well as "cheating" and "bad dietary choices." His methodology for determining all that is quite scientific, as he explains:

I've interviewed over a dozen people who check out people who pay with food stamps and all felt people on food stamps ate better — or at least more costly — than they did. A store manager up

north says she can tell who is on food stamps and who is not by what's in their shopping cart. All had anecdotes about steak or lobsters they would have been reticent to buy themselves.

Grothman is well known as a troll in Wisconsin, where he's been a member of the State Assembly since 1993. Both [Politico](#) and [Politifact](#) have compendiums of his most outrageous statements: that Kwanzaa and Martin Luther King Jr. Day should both be abolished, that single parenthood is "a contributing factor to child abuse and neglect," and that homosexuality shouldn't be mentioned in sex-ed classes [because it will turn school children gay](#). And now he's been set loose in national politics. Thanks a lot, Wisconsin.