



# Welfare Reform Flashback

*As Obama Moves To Cut The Work Requirement From Welfare, A Look Back To What Democrats Have Said About Welfare Reform*

## DISREGARDING CONGRESS, OBAMA WILL NOW GRANT WAIVERS TO STATES FROM THE WELFARE TO WORK REQUIREMENT

**“A July Directive From The Department Of Health And Human Services (HHS) Has Sparked Questions About Whether Obama Has Changed Positions” On Welfare Reform.** “During the 2008 presidential campaign, pastor Rick Warren asked Senator Barack Obama if he had changed his mind on any substantive issue in the past decade. Obama’s answer: welfare reform. Obama said he initially thought President Clinton’s 1996 welfare-reform bill would have disastrous results. By 2008, he was ‘absolutely convinced’ that the work-centered approach in Clinton’s law must be ‘the centerpiece of any social policy.’ A July directive from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has sparked questions about whether Obama has changed positions once again, and made welfare reform an unlikely issue in the 2012 election.” (Alex Rogers, “New Welfare Reform Directive Creates Unlikely Political Issue For Obama,” [Time’s “Swampland.”](#) 7/31/12)

**HHS Will Grant States Waivers To Experiment With How They Administer The Temporary Assistance For Needy Families Program.** “The Department of Health and Human Services announced last week that it would grant states waivers to experiment with how they administer the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, which distributes aid to the poorest Americans while they look for work.” (Rebecca Berg, “Shift In Welfare Policy Draws G.O.P. Protests,” [The New York Times](#), 7/17/12)

**The Detroit News: “In A Blatant Challenge To The Legislative Branch, Obama By Executive Order Tossed Out The Clinton-Era Welfare Reform.”** “In a blatant challenge to the legislative branch, Obama by executive order tossed out the Clinton-era welfare reform that required able-bodied aid recipients to work, saying the federal government will no longer enforce the law.” (Editorial, “Obama’s Power Grab Flouts Constitution,” [The Detroit News](#), 8/6/12)

**Republicans Argue The Waivers Undercut Work Requirements.** “A move by the Obama administration to give states more latitude in running federal welfare-to-work programs has set off a firestorm among Republicans, who say it undercuts the work requirements set forth in the 1996 overhaul of welfare policy.” (Rebecca Berg, “Shift In Welfare Policy Draws G.O.P. Protests,” [The New York Times](#), 7/17/12)

- **And “Characterize The Move As A Power Grab By The Executive Branch.”** “The directive

results from a broader effort by the Obama administration to peel back unnecessary layers of bureaucracy and allow states to spend federal money more efficiently. But Republicans, who characterize the move as a power grab by the executive branch, have criticized the waivers, saying they prove that the president and Democrats support providing welfare money without encouraging the recipients to find work.” (Rebecca Berg, “Shift In Welfare Policy Draws G.O.P. Protests,” [The New York Times](#), 7/17/12)

## FLASHBACK: WHAT TOP DEMOCRATS HAVE SAID ABOUT WELFARE TO WORK

### *Bill Clinton*

**Bill Clinton On Signing Welfare To Work: “The New Bill Restores America's Basic Bargain Of Providing Opportunity And Demanding, In Return, Responsibility.”** CLINTON: “The new bill restores America's basic bargain of providing opportunity and demanding, in return, responsibility. It provides \$14 billion for child care, \$4 billion more than the present law does. It is good because without the assurance of child care it's all but impossible for a mother with young children to go to work. It requires States to maintain their own spending on welfare reform and gives them powerful performance incentives to place more people on welfare in jobs. It gives States the capacity to create jobs by taking money now used for welfare checks and giving it to employers as subsidies as incentives to hire people.”

(Bill Clinton, [Remarks On Signing The Personal Responsibility And Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act Of 1996 And An Exchange With Reporters](#), Washington, D.C., 8/22/96)

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**Clinton: “This Bill Will Help People To Go To Work So They Can Stop Drawing A Welfare Check And Start Drawing A Paycheck.”** (Bill Clinton, [Remarks On Signing The Personal Responsibility And Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act Of 1996 And An Exchange With Reporters](#), Washington, D.C., 8/22/96)

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**Clinton: “It Is Now Clearly Better To Go To Work Than To Stay On Welfare—Clearly Better.”** (Bill Clinton, [Remarks On Signing The Personal Responsibility And Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act Of 1996 And An Exchange With Reporters](#), Washington, D.C., 8/22/96)

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### *Hillary Clinton*

**Hillary Clinton: “By The Time Bill And I Left The White House, Welfare Rolls Had Dropped 60 Percent From 14.1 Million To 5.8 Million, And Millions Of Parents Had Gone To Work.”** “By the time Bill and I left the White house, welfare rolls had dropped 60 percent from 14.1 million to 5.8 million, and millions of parents had gone to work. States had supported part-time and low-wage work by continuing to provide medical benefits and food stamps for these workers. By January 2001, child poverty had decreased by more than 25 percent and was at its lowest rate since 1979.” (Hillary Clinton, *Living History*, 2003, p. 370)

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**Clinton: “A Significant Contributor To The Success Of Reform Was The Welfare To Work Partnership.”** “A significant contributor to the success of reform was the Welfare to Work Partnership, which Bill had asked one of his longtime friends, Eli Segal, to launch as a means of encouraging employers to hire former welfare recipients.” (Hillary Clinton, *Living History*, 2003, p. 370)

### *Rahm Emanuel*

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**Then Congressman And Later Obama Chief Of Staff Rahm Emanuel: Clinton “Succeeded In Forming A System That Both Rewarded And Required Work.”** EMANUEL: “President Clinton vowed to end welfare as we know it and he succeeded in forming a system that both rewarded and required work.” (Rep. Rahm Emanuel, [Remarks On The House Floor](#), 7/25/06)

***Harry Reid***

**Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) Said Welfare Reform Has “Been Good For The Country.”** “I sure hope he does, just like welfare reform. No matter how we got welfare reform, we got it, and it’s been good for the country. . . . If we do something that’s good, there’s all kinds of credit to go around -- the Republican House, a Democratic Senate and President Bush.” (CNN’s “Evans, Novak, Hunt, & Shields,” 6/9/01)