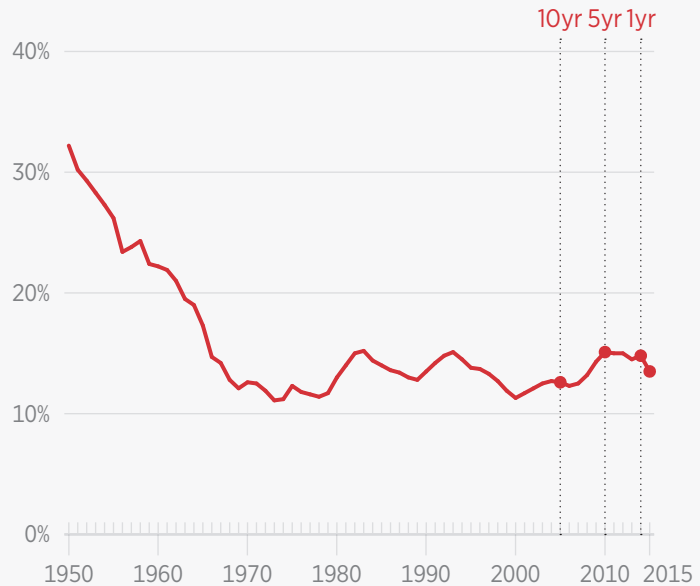


## Self-Sufficiency

From 2005 to 2015, the percentage of individuals living in poverty (excluding welfare benefits) increased by 0.9 percentage point.

PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS WHO LIVE IN POVERTY (EXCLUDING WELFARE BENEFITS)



**SOURCES:** U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

# It's Time to Fix Our Welfare System

The Honorable Jim Jordan

**A**cross this country, too many Americans feel that their government has forgotten them. Instead of fighting for their needs, their representatives give special deals to special interests, and everyday citizens are left to foot the bill.

The House Freedom Caucus was formed to remember those forgotten Americans and fight for them. We must do this by simplifying the tax code so that connected businesses don't get special carve-outs. We must also do this by reforming our welfare system so that taxpayers receive the return on investment that they deserve—and so that we partner compassionately with those in need and help them to rise out of poverty.

Our current welfare system is structured to disincentivize self-improvement and the reaching of full potentials. If a couple gets

married, they are penalized and lose benefits. In addition, most welfare programs provide able-bodied individuals with benefits without requiring the recipient either to hold a job or to search or prepare for work. This encourages idleness—the exact opposite of what our welfare system should do.

To improve the well-being of the poor, the welfare system should promote rather than penalize marriage and encourage work rather than idleness. That's why I have worked with Senator Mike Lee of Utah and Congressman Mark Meadows of North Carolina to introduce the Welfare Reform and Upward Mobility Act.<sup>1</sup> This bill would fix the incentive structure for the federal food stamp program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Under our bill, able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) would be required to

get a part-time or full-time job, be in school, be in job training, or be actively looking for a job in order to receive SNAP benefits. Far from punishing those who need help, this requirement would partner with unemployed or underemployed individuals to make sure that they are getting the education or training they need in order to compete in today's marketplace. For those applying for work, professionals would supervise their search to make sure that it ended in employment instead of a string of demoralizing rejection letters.

These reforms are modeled on similar reforms in the state of Maine and on the bipartisan 1996 welfare reform act. Both successfully helped Americans to escape the cycle of poverty and pursue their American dream. Both helped the downtrodden to look up and see their potential, reach for it, and successfully seize it.

This is both a compassionate way to help people out of poverty and responsible answer to our current fiscal troubles. With \$20 trillion in debt, our country cannot afford to sit idly by and be content with the status quo. We need to find smart solutions to problems of government spending and entitlement insolvency. When we do that, we will be taking major steps toward remembering the needs of those ordinary Americans who sent us to Washington to represent them in the first place.

**The Honorable Jim Jordan** represents Ohio's Fourth District in the U.S. House of Representatives.