

National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support

Do Not Co-Sponsor the Carper-Bayh Bill *Bush "Lite" Would Hurt Poor Families with Children*

Senator's Tom Carper (D-DE) and Evan Bayh (D-IN) unveiled their welfare reform plan on Wednesday 2/27. Senators Zell Miller (D-GA), Ben Nelson (D-NE) and Jean Carnahan (D-MO) have signaled their support for the bill, which has not yet been introduced as legislation. The bill is a virtual "clone" of the Bush welfare plan. The bill:

1. Proposes a massive increase in the work requirements for states (from 50% of the caseload to 70%), and for individuals (from 30 hours to 40 hours per week). The result will be more dead-end workfare "jobs" and churning of the welfare rolls, as families fail to make progress on a path out of poverty. Many of the parents remaining on TANF have serious problems that need to be addressed. A "one-size-fits-all" approach will prevent them from getting the services they need. Many states, including Indiana and Delaware, are VERY far from the 70% target in the Carper/Bayh bill, and either could not accomplish it or would have to institute unpaid "workfare" jobs to do so. Workfare programs in New York have been an abysmal failure –they fail to prepare people for real jobs and don't invest in people's skills. Workfare jobs don't provide the basic rights that other workers have, for example, protection against sexual harassment and health and safety protections.
2. Increases work requirements for states and parents without providing one red cent in additional funding for TANF and insufficient funding for childcare. If funding for the TANF block grant is not adjusted to keep pace with inflation, the real value of the block grant will decline by 22% by 2007. By increasing work requirements without increasing TANF funding, the bill would prevent families from getting the transportation, training and other help they need. The bill also fails to sufficiently increase funding for child care. The bill proposes a measly \$3 billion increase over five years, but the minimum cost of the increase in work participation rates and work hour requirements is probably four to six times that amount.
3. Does nothing to increase education and training opportunities for low-income parents. The current "caps" on education and training in current law are maintained. The bill would prevent states from offering and families from getting the services they need to move out of poverty. Research shows that education and training are the surest path out of poverty.
4. Fails to restore benefits to legal immigrants. The bill fails to restore TANF, SSI or Medicaid benefits to legal immigrants. Immigrants work hard, pay taxes and are eligible to serve in the military, but are made ineligible for the safety net when they fall on hard times.
5. Does nothing to change time limits. 150,000 families have had their benefits reduced or ended because of time limits, and those families are experiencing extreme hardship. Time limits take effect in many states this year, when the economy is weak. Parents that are "following the rules" should not be subject to time limits.