

MEMORANDUM

TO: NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR JOBS AND INCOME SUPPORT
FROM: PETER D. HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES
DATE: APRIL 12, 2002
SUBJECT: TANF/WELFARE SURVEY FINDINGS

On behalf of the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support, Peter D. Hart Research Associates has conducted a survey among registered voters on welfare issues relevant to Congress' consideration of TANF reauthorization. The survey was conducted from March 19 to 21 among a representative national sample of 801 voters, with a margin of error of +/-3.5%. This memorandum reviews the survey's key findings.

1. Voters say that expansion of training, child care, and other work supports—not increased work requirements or marriage promotion—should be the number-one welfare priority for Congress.

Voters overwhelmingly believe that expanding training and support that helps people move from welfare to good jobs should be Congress' top welfare priority today. Fully 62% cite work support as their first choice, whereas only 15% give top billing to implementing tougher work requirements, and a mere 5% select promotion of marriage. When asked to consider the choice between establishing tougher work requirements or expanding child care and other supports, which is now emerging as the central welfare debate in Congress, voters have no trouble choosing sides. By 71% to 22%, expanding work supports is felt to be the higher priority. Still more decisively, voters think that expanding work supports should be a higher priority than programs that encourage marriage (86% to 8%). Surprisingly, a 53% majority actually opposes a proposal to increase funding for marriage promotion.

2. The voting public supports a TANF reform agenda of expanded access to work supports, more training and education, flexible time limits, workplace safeguards for recipients, and public job creation.

? Fully 88% of voters favor allowing people to fulfill their work requirement by taking job training, and 84% say that education should fulfill the requirement.

? 85% would apply workplace protections, such as the minimum wage and health and safety protections, to welfare recipients who are meeting their work requirements.

? 82% favor, 49% strongly, increasing funds for job training, child care, and other welfare-to-work programs.

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- ? 75% favor, 45% strongly, creating public jobs for people on welfare who are willing to work but cannot find private employment.
- ? By 60% to 36%, voters favor flexibility in applying welfare time limits to extend support for families in need, rather than strict enforcement for all welfare families. Two-thirds or more would extend the five-year benefit limit for women caring for a sick or disabled family member (78%), those working but still earning less than the poverty level (66%), and those completing a high school degree or receiving job training (66%).
- ? By five-to-one, voters prefer placing recipients in transitional job programs in which people earn a wage, qualify for the E.I.T.C., and receive training (78%) over government work-experience programs that provide no pay other than their welfare benefit (16%).

3. Only 43% of voters support the Bush administration's welfare plan, and a two-to-one majority prefers a Democratic plan focused on work supports and more flexible time limits.

The welfare plan advanced by the Bush administration is endorsed by only 43% of voters, and a 46% plurality rejects the plan when presented with pro and con arguments.

Supporters say that the Bush administration's plan would build on the success of welfare reform in promoting work. The plan would strengthen work requirements for people on welfare, provide states with three hundred million dollars for marriage-promotion programs, and maintain current funding levels for child care, job training, and other welfare-to-work programs.

Opponents say that the Bush plan is flawed because it increases work requirements without providing any new money for child care, training, or other supports that help low-income parents get good jobs. A one-size-fits-all work requirement won't allow states to meet the needs of different families—for example, education and training. They say that Congress should use new funds for welfare-to-work programs, not for government marriage programs.

The administration proposal fares even less well when contrasted with a Democratic welfare plan. By two to one (60% to 31%), voters prefer a plan that expands work supports, permits flexibility in time limits, and expands access to education and training.

The Bush administration's plan builds on the success of welfare reform by requiring states to impose tougher work requirements for people on welfare. It also provides states with three hundred million dollars for programs that promote marriage among people on welfare, but it does not increase funding for child care, job training, and other welfare-to-work programs.

The plan by congressional Democrats would increase the availability of child care, transportation assistance, and other welfare-to-work programs. It would permit flexibility in time limits so that families meeting their work requirements are not cut off. And it would expand access to education and training so that people can get and keep good jobs.

4. Americans decisively reject a 40-hour work requirement for mothers on welfare.

Fully 65% of voters say that the current 30-hour work requirement for mothers on welfare should be maintained, almost three times the proportion that support proposals to increase the work requirement to 40 hours per week (24%). For mothers with children under age six, the verdict is still more decisive. Just 21% believe that mothers with young children should face a 40-hour work requirement, whereas 71% are satisfied with the current 20- to 30-hour requirements.