



# THE FELDMAN GROUP, INC.

November 13, 2001

TO: Interested Parties

FR: Diane Feldman

RE: Recent Nationwide Survey on TANF Reform<sup>1</sup>

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Our nationwide survey this past summer on behalf of The National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support indicates strong voter support for shifting the goal of Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) away from reducing the number of people on assistance and toward moving people out of poverty. Support for this goal is both broad and deep and extends across ideological and partisan lines. Some of the highlights from the survey include:

**1. *Even while being unfamiliar with the changes in 1996, most voters support the reform.***

?? Only 44 percent of voters say they are either somewhat familiar (36 percent) or very familiar (8 percent) with the changes. Considering voters who have some familiarity with the changes (including those who say they are not very familiar), we found that a strong majority approve of the changes. Nearly two-thirds of voters approve of the changes (63 percent), including 21 percent who strongly approve. Only 19 percent of voters disapprove of the changes.

**2. *Even while supporting the 1996 reforms, voters support changing the principal goal of the welfare system so that the new focus is moving people out of poverty and not merely lowering the number of people receiving assistance.***

?? Sixty-seven (67) percent of voters support changing the system to include helping people get an education and learn new skills so they can earn enough money to move out of poverty. A quarter of voters (25 percent) support the current goal of the system focusing on moving people to a job as quickly as possible and off of the welfare rolls. Support for changing the system does not fall below 58 percent in any demographic group. Support for changing the goal of the system extends beyond partisanship as majorities of both conservatives (60 percent) and Republicans (56 percent) support change.

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<sup>1</sup> These conclusions are drawn from a nationwide survey of registered voters. The survey was conducted between July 30 and August 2, 2001, by professional interviewers. The survey sample was a random digit dial sample. A total of 1,000 interviews were completed, yielding a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points at 95 percent confidence.

**3. *Voters also support the value of parents staying home and raising children. The core of this belief is based on the needs of children.***

?? 71 percent approve of the proposal allowing a parent on welfare with a child younger than three to stay home with the child. Sixty-four (64) percent support the proposal for a parent with children younger than age six. The proposal allowing parents to stay home and raise their children is the third most popular tested and support is consistent across demographic groups.

?? Fifty (50) percent believe we should give families on welfare the same options as middle class families, while 38 percent think parents should be required to work. Support for allowing parents to stay home is more intense (34 percent strongly support) than support for requiring parents to work (26 percent strongly support). Among middle class voters (annual incomes between \$35,000 to \$55,000) support is strongest for giving parents receiving assistance the same opportunities as other middle class families (57 percent support).

**4. *Voters support allowing parents to fulfill their work requirement through training and skill acquisition, and “stopping the clock” if the person is doing all the system requires.***

?? Support for allowing people to fulfill their work requirement through the acquisition of training and skills is nearly universal, with 95 percent of voters supporting the proposal, including 75 percent who strongly support the change.

?? A majority of voters support allowing people who are doing everything the system requires to receive assistance after the five-year time limit (65 percent favor).

Overall, voters base their support for changing the focus of TANF on two pillars: (1) Lifting families from poverty; and (2) Helping people provide for themselves. Support for these values reaches beyond geographic bounds and across partisan lines.

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