A lot of them were willing to vote for it because I talked to Members on both sides. They are willing to vote for it, either for or against it this morning without knowing the details. Just the idea of what is in there.

I give you a great deal of concern, that we have here representatives of the people in the U.S. House of Representatives that are willing to vote on a far-reaching piece of legislation that will impact on millions of people and yet doing it without knowing exactly what is in it. It gives me a great deal of concern about the Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, not as great a deal as the policy that is being followed of, again, dictating to the Members of the House. That is basically what we are seeing here, is a dictatorial policy, autocratic. The leadership knows better than anybody else. We are going to do it their way or no way, and that is what we are up against today.

It is a policy that I think has led us to a lack of bipartisanship in this House. It is the Republican leadership, in my opinion, Speaker GINGRICH, Floor Leader DICK ARMLEY, that are responsible for the highly partisanship feeling that pervades this House today. It is not only just on this side. It is on the majority side, too. I hear it constantly, about the partisanship. Yet everybody stands up and says, We ought to be bipartisan; we need to be bipartisan. How can we be bipartisan when the hand is never reached out to the other side to say, hey, what can we do together on this. That hand is never reached out. Instead, it is just like this legislation, this rule, it is dictated from above. It is toned down. Take it or leave it. That is the way it is. There is no bipartisanship. There is no attempt to be bipartisan in this House. I hope that somewhere between now and the end of this session we will see some change in that leadership under the Speaker would see fit to not be so autocratic, not to be so dictatorial, but to reach out that hand to Members on this side and say, let us work together the rest of the year on legislation and let us be bipartisan. There is not much bipartisan here today.

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

First of all, to the gentleman from Missouri, I wanted to caution him a little on the utilization of the word "dictatorship." I do not think that adds to the comity on the floor. I think we should approach those kind of terms with some trepidation.

Let me address the other point. That is, I do not want the gentleman from Missouri, because I have great respect for the gentleman, to continue to use inaccurate facts. The gentleman stated to our body here that when they were in effect, they did not see these great rules until the end of the session. I do not know why this keeps coming up, but time after time after time, when we deal with a rule, Mr. Speaker, we have to repudiate that. I have got the facts right here. I would be happy, if the gentleman would like to come over here, we will show him the statistics.

Let me cover very briefly. It was not near the end of the session when this side utilized this rule. In fact, it was in February, in March, in March, in March, in March, in March, and then, of course, we had some throughout the rest of the session, too. I just want to make sure that we are accurate on our facts.

The real thing that I caution the gentleman from Missouri, his statements about this is not bipartisan. In fact, I think this bill right here, No. 1, both Democrats and Republicans and unaffiliated and reform party people from across this country acknowledge that welfare needs to be changed. The system does not work. All of the incentive on this system is to stay on it, not to get off it. The system helps people that do not need help and does not help the people that really do need help.

Since I have been up here, I do not think I know such a major piece of legislation that has had more joint effort. Certainly the last 3 or 4 hours, I was somewhat amused when the gentleman said this morning, this morning escaped from the House, frankly, there was a lot of partisanship delay this morning. But we have gotten past that.

The bill itself, the substance of this bill is a bipartisan product, a Democrat and Republican product. Certainly, it has been brought up by the Republican leadership. It is a Republican part of our contract. It was one of our biggest efforts, but we have had lots of help and we have appreciated that.

\[1345\]

It is bipartisan, and at 2 o'clock and 15 minutes, the President of this country is going to hold a press conference where we anticipate that he is going to agree to sign this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. Fox].

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. McINNIS] for extending the time because today, Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity to pass a stark welfare reform that requires work and personal responsibility and lifts families from lives of despair and hopelessness. I think we should especially look to the fact that for able-bodied individuals this Congress and this Government will make sure that we have job training and job placement for the able-bodied, and for those that truly are in need, just seeking it, we will be there.

The fact is that on child nutrition programs we are talking about block-granting the States, which is a great benefit because right now on child nutrition programs we are spending 15 percent to administer those programs, and the States, only 5 percent for administration. With the extra 10 percent they will receive from the Federal Government, they must feed more children more meals by our great standards.

The States will follow the Federal standards. On child support enforcement, we are going to make sure that all of those individuals that do not now have, for many deadbeat dads and other parents, the funds they need to make sure that the children are protected. They will have to adopt in each State programs like they have in Maine where they had 21,000 people who have not paid their child support; and when they said they could lose their driver's license, they in fact, 95 percent within 30 days, paid their child support payment.

So we see a program that is going to become more modern, more sensitive, and make sure that we take care of those in need, and we make sure that the welfare reform that we have crafted here is bipartisan and worthy of the votes of both sides of the aisle in both chambers, and, hopefully, as well, with our President.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move previous question on the resolution.

The question was ordered. The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3734, PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND WORK OPPORTUNITY RECONCILIATION ACT OF 1996

Mr. SOLomon, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 104-729) on the resolution (H. Res. 495) waiving points of order against the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 3734) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 201(a)(1) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 1997, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

Mr. SOLomon. Mr. Speaker, I call up the resolution (H. Res. 495) waiving points of order against the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 3734) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 201(a)(1) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 1997 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

\[H. Res. 495\]

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 3734) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 201(a)(1) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 1997.

All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read. The yeas and nays shall be considered as ordered on adoption of the conference report and on any subsequent conference report or motion to
Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, for the purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from New York [Mr. MOAKLEY], pending which I yield myself such time as I might consume. During consideration of the resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, this rule waives all points of order against the conference report to accompany H.R. 3734, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, and against its consideration.

Additionally, the rule provides that the conference report shall be considered as read. The rule also orders the yeas and nays on the adoption of the conference report and on any subsequent conference report or motion to dispose of an amendment between the Houses.

Finally, the rule provides that the provisions of clause 5(c) of rule XXI requiring a three-fifths vote on any income tax rate increase shall not apply to the bill, amendments thereto, or to the conference report thereon.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from New York has several waiver requests pending for low-income programs, and New York certainly needs flexibility for budgetary purposes, and we are being stonewalled by this administration because none of those waivers have been granted in a State that is overburdened with welfare problems today. Thankfully, this Byzantine procedure will be relegated to the dust bin of history once and for all. The waiver request is then subject to endless debate by bureaucrats and subject to negotiation and even change by the Federal departments involved.

Mr. Speaker, in March 1995, I called up the rule that provided for consideration of the first welfare reform bill. Sixteen months, two bills, and two Presidential vetoes later we stand on the precipice of enacting real comprehensive, compassionate welfare reform legislation.

Throughout the passionate debate on this subject we have held firm on our principles to enact a reform to the Nation’s welfare system which requires work, which imposes time limits on benefits for welfare recipients, and which allows for innovative State solutions to help the underprivileged in our communities. We have not departed from these principles throughout the confusion and conflict in the President’s Office. These principles are embodied in the conference agreement before the House today.

Mr. Speaker, these principles are not implemented in a vacuum. The conference package addresses concerns associated with a radical overhaul of the Nation’s welfare programs.

First and foremost, it should be made perfectly clear that this bill takes care of unfortunate people who are disabled, and able-bodied people are taken care of as a secondary basis, but the key word is temporary. After being taken care of on a limited basis, these people are going to have to go to work.

The legislation contains valuable reforms to the food stamp program, designed to curb fraud and abuse and requiring work for those food stamps.

The agreement authorizes $22 billion in child care funding over the next 6 years, which is more than $3 billion over current law.

Finally, the legislation contains tough measures to crack down on deadbeat dads who abrogate their moral responsibility to their children; and, Mr. Speaker, in contrast to the bold and honest proposals that Congress has put forward to reform welfare, the President has acted with characteristic timidity.

The alleged welfare reform that the Clinton administration says it has achieved is in actuality a fraud. It just is not there, and the savings show it. The President asserts that he has achieved a degree of welfare reform by granting waivers from his bureaucrats for States to experiment in this area.

The reality we have heard testimony on this floor from State after State that the waiver process is that thoughtful and experimental governors must troop to Washington DC, hat in hand, and request permission to reform their low-income programs. The waiver request is then subject to endless debate by bureaucrats and subject to negotiation and even change by the Federal departments involved.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from New York has several waiver requests pending for low-income programs, and New York certainly needs flexibility for budgetary purposes, and we are being stonewalled by this administration because none of those waivers have been granted in a State that is overburdened with welfare problems today. Thankfully, this Byzantine procedure will be relegated to the dust bin of history once and for all. The waiver request is then subject to endless debate by bureaucrats and subject to negotiation and even change by the Federal departments involved.

Mr. Speaker, I was raised to treat the poor with compassion, as most Americans are. The way to effect change for those who suffer in poverty is certainly not additional handouts and entrapment in the current cycle of dependency that has bred second- and third- and now fourth-generation welfare recipients. Rather, we should emphasize welfare as a temporary boost from despair to the sense of self-worth inherent in work.

Mr. Speaker, I raised to treat the less fortunate in our society with compassion, as most Americans are. The way to effect change for those who suffer in poverty is certainly not additional handouts and entrapment in the current cycle of dependency that has bred second- and third- and now fourth-generation welfare recipients. Rather, we should emphasize welfare as a temporary boost from despair to the sense of self-worth inherent in work.

Mr. Speaker, that is what we ought to be doing, that is what we can do here today. This legislation gives the single moms and kids, who are the vast majority of welfare recipients, an opportunity to escape a life of relying on government benefits. A vote against this package is a vote to deny kids on welfare hope to escape a life of welfare dependency.

Mr. Speaker, this House will today once again pass comprehensive welfare reform by a wide bipartisan margin. The Senate is likely to do the same before we recess this Friday. I sincerely hope the President lives up to his announcement a few minutes ago and agrees with the bipartisan majorities in both houses of Congress and overwhelming public sentiment and he the legislation. If he does, the status quo goes out the window, and finally, we are going to do something about this ever, ever-increasing welfare load in our country.

I strongly urge passage of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Washington [Mr. MCDERMOTT].

(Mr. MCDERMOTT asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, we started this Congress with the majority indicating that they were going to follow new procedures, and they made a big show of all the rules changes we were to have. Here we are ramming through the biggest change of policy toward children in this country with a bill that has been in our hands for a little more than 12 hours.

This bill, which was delivered to the Members of Congress last night at 1 o’clock in the morning. All that is being characterized as partisan fighting out here is basically a resistance to having something like this rammed through the Congress with a good deal of rhetoric and a lot of noise around it, but the facts belie what is being said.

Now, the gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON] has started to debate the bill and said this is a bill about work, but if my colleagues take this bill, and they go to page 80 under section 415, it is the section called waivers, and if my colleagues can wade through this language, and I will read it for them:

Except as provided in subparagraph (B), if any waiver granted to a State under section 1115 of this Act or otherwise which relates to the provision of assistance under a State plan under this part (as in effect on September 30, 1990) is in effect as of the date of the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, the amendments made by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (other than by section 103(c) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996) shall not apply with respect to the State before the expiration of the period of assistance.

Let me tell my colleagues what that means. That means that in 43 States there is no requirement for work. Every bit of work requirement in this bill is a fraud because with that waiver on page 80, section 415, we allow any State who has a waiver now in effect, and there are 43 of them in, if they are in effect, they can waive the work requirements.

There are only seven places in the United States making up 5 percent of the welfare load; that is Alaska, Idaho, Washi...
Rhode Island, Kansas, Kentucky, New Mexico, and Nevada that do not have waivers. If we read that section further, all they have to do is get a waiver from the Federal Government and those seven States can be out. There is no requirement to work in this bill, because they write all the perfect language, spend 50 pages saying work, work, work, and then at the bottom, they give a waiver. If there is a waiver, Mr. Speaker, in their State, their State does not have to provide a job. Let me explain the problem. What it is like in Washington State, because I know the situation there. We have 100,000 people on public assistance. We have 125,000 people who have been drawing unemployment benefits. That is 225,000 people in the State of Washington who do not have work.

If tomorrow, with this bill passed, every one of them showed up and said, “I want a job,” the State of Washington could say, “We do not have any responsibility to have a waiver. We have a waiver. The State of Washington has a waiver.” Even if they were going to be responsible, even if the State of Washington said, “We really care about these 225,000 people and their families,” last year, the State of Washington Members have to remember, is the fifth most rapidly growing State economically. We are at the top in this country. In our State last year we provided 44,000 new jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge people to vote against this bill. It is bad. It is a fraud.

Mr. SOLOMON. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am a little concerned, Mr. Speaker, I want to take just a minute to tell the gentleman, I think he is on the Committee on Ways and Means. As a matter of fact, at 12 o’clock last night this report was filed. There were those of us who were here and saw to it that the report was delivered to the minority at that time. However, earlier in the day, in the morning yesterday, this report was complete and given to the minority. I do not know why the gentleman from Washington did not see it. His own staff on the Committee on Ways and Means had possession of this report, so the gentleman should have done his due diligence and he would have had that information.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say one thing about the work requirements. I am a little concerned with the bill, because it has been watered down so much. As a matter of fact, when the bill left this House we had a family cap, which meant young girls that continue to have baby after baby after baby could not just continue to have more and more and more welfare benefits given to them. Unfortunately, that was dropped. A phrase was put in that would allow States to opt in, or rather, would allow States to opt out, as opposed to opting in.

Let the true Members what happens in a State like New York State, where we have had for years now the Cadillac of welfare programs and the Cadillac of Medicaid programs, whereby New York State has exercised their option to opt in for all of these various programs above and beyond the base coverages for welfare and Medicaid.

In our State, we do not stand any chance of being able to change that law. If we had arranged to have them be able to opt in, as opposed to opt out, then we could have expected some real change. So I am concerned about that, but we will live to fight that battle another day.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman’s President is saying, this is a work-for-welfare program. I am surprised to hear the gentleman from Washington try to refute that.

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SOLOMON. I yield to the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the committee for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I know there has been some issue raised regarding the waivers for the work requirement. The waivers are all drawn more strictly than current law. I think that is an important point to make. The waivers that have been written, the administration are more strict than current law. The current waivers do not apply to the percentage work requirement in the legislation. I think that is another important point to make. I thank the gentleman for that.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentleman from Massachusetts for giving me an opportunity to speak out on this. I am not sure what to say to everybody’s mind. It is just so close to the election, I suppose, on both sides of the aisle we get blinded about substance in our concern as to what is it that the po-llesters really want.

A lot of concern has been in the White House and on the Hill as to whether or not the President would breach his promise to change welfare as we know it. I would think that the chairman of the Committee on Rules, Mr. CAMP, has said that the Committee on Rules has worked on this legislation, would have to agree that there is no urgency in terms of Members understanding the work that was done in conference. This is not an unusual thing, unless it has something to do with the fact that we are going into recess, and that this will be a political issue back home.

Other than that, it seems to me if we are talking about millions of children, then we would talk about it. Republican, Christians, Jews, black, white, Americans, and certainly the lesser among us, that all of us would want to make certain that we are doing the right thing; and really, not even push the President into making a hasty decision; when at least the last position he took was that he appreciated the direction in which the legislation was going and he saw some imperfections which could be worked out. Congress is who said that he wanted to change welfare and knew it.

What is welfare? What is this obsession about putting people to work? Everyone agrees if you are able to work, you
Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California, the Honorable GEORGE MILLER, the ranking member on the Committee on Resources.

(MR. MILLER of California asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, today is a seminal day. Not only are we presented with a welfare bill by the Republicans that for the first time in history does a great deal of harm to children in this country, but we have learned in the last few minutes that the President of the United States, Mr. Clinton, now says that he will sign that bill.

This is a President who, along with the First Lady, have spent much of their public life trying to help children. Now he says he will sign a bill that, for the first time, knowingly, he has been presented the evidence by his own Cabinet, he has been presented the evidence by the Urban Institute and others, that will knowingly put somewhere around 1 million children who are currently not into poverty, into poverty.

Almost half of those children are in families that are working, where people get up and they go to work every day. But at the end of the year, they are poor. This bill puts those children into poverty. That cannot be a proper purpose of the U.S. Congress, and that cannot be a proper endorsement for the President of the United States.

It is against the interest of our children. Yes, this program was started many years ago to try and save the children. For many, many years we have lifted those children out of poverty, as well as we have done for the seniors, but it was a national goal.

This bill now for the first time, again knowingly, the evidence is in front of us, and yet we are being asked to make a decision to reverse that trend and to once again put children into poverty. They can lose their benefits under this with nobody having offered their parents a chance to work or requiring them to do so, because in the 11th hour the President, God bless him, about their desire to put people to work came in and got loopholes put into this bill so they do not have to meet the very standards that they said they were prepared to change this program from welfare to work. It has not worked.

So how did they achieve the budget savings, then? They achieved the budget savings by going after children, by going after women. I grew up, and I think most people in this country believe that when you said women and children first, what you were saying is you wanted to care for those individuals. This legislation suggests that they will be the first to be harmed and that is what this legislation allows.

I urge my colleagues to vote for fairness, compassion, and responsibility, and pass a compromise agreement on H.R. 3437.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California, the Honorable GEORGE MILLER, the ranking member on the Committee on Resources.

(MR. MILLER of California asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, today is a seminal day. Not only are we presented with a welfare bill by the Republicans that for the first time in history does a great deal of harm to children in this country, but we have learned in the last few minutes that the President of the United States, Mr. Clinton, now says that he will sign that bill.

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ours where we have seen job after job after job chased out of our State because we just could not afford to do the things for business and industry that were necessary because of the terrible welfare burden. That is all changing now with the change in the direction of this legislation. We are once and for all going to be able to let those people who have the experience, those people down at the local levels of government who have to deal with the welfare recipients day in and day out, let them be the ones with the solutions. That is what this debate is all about.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Columbus, OH [Ms. Pryce], a member of the Committee on Rules.

Ms. Pryce. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished chairman of the Rules Committee for yielding me this time. I rise in strong support of this fair rule to bring about real welfare reform.

Mr. Speaker, a generation ago, Americans celebrated war on poverty in the hope of creating a Great Society. But nearly 30 years and more than $5 trillion later, what we are left with is a failed welfare system that has deprived hope, diminished opportunity, and delayed precious lives. Our country, and the future generations of Americans who will lead her, deserve a better system.

Today we will consider a conference report that replaces a welfare system debilitated by strict Federal control with a system based on innovation and flexibility at the State and local level. Instead of promoting dependency and illegitimacy, this conference agreement is built on the dignity of work and the enduring strength of families. By taking the Federal bureaucracy out of welfare, this legislation promotes creative solutions closer to home and offers a real sense of hope to the truly needy and the less fortunate.

Mr. Speaker, despite the comments we will hear today, this is a compassionate bill. Helping those who by no fault of their own have fallen on hard times is the right thing to do. This bill responds to that in the finest American tradition. But when we help people that are able-bodied, when we just hand them a check, those people who make little or no effort to help themselves, we risk destroying the American spirit and undermining our society at large.

This conference agreement represents a true bipartisan attempt to change welfare as we know it. I hope the President will not shy away again from this historic opportunity for change.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to have the courage to set aside the status quo, to think of the children and families of this Nation and to embrace real reform. I urge a “yes” vote on both sides of the aisle for this rule and the conference report.

Mr. Moakley. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida [Mrs. Meeke].

(Mrs. Meeke of Florida asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, both times I have risen, I have risen in strong opposition to the rule and I will be doing so, I feel, to the conference report.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think many people in this Congress really understand the effects of welfare. I think the system could work. I am sure that there are many people who still abuse this system. We have not yet changed to any great extent the enforcement, to be sure, that people who do not deserve welfare are on it and those who are abusing it get punished for being so.

Mr. Speaker, I contend that this conference report does not meet the needs of the people they are hoping that it will meet. We are still going to have hunger. Do you feel that the who are not taken care of by their States. I served as a State legislator. We still did not give matching funds for the funds that the Federal Government gave us. Now that we are cutting the funds, are they going to do any better? My answer is no.

The real world will teach everyone in this Congress that you are hurting children. It seems to me that you are doing it deliberately because many of us have said to you and shown you evidence that it is going to do it. OMB has done it. Several agencies with whom you have great credibility have shown the same. It permits the States to experiment with our children in order to get savings of $40 to $60 billion in Federal funds. Why save it when you are losing your main human resources, your children?

Almost one-third of these cuts come from mistreating the children of immigrants. Do you want your children to be treated any less than when they go down to get medical treatment? Do you want your children to be treated any less than when they go down to get medical treatment? Go to the States.

The Dade County schools would have to collect information from every single child in Dade County and the State of Florida. Florida estimates that it will lose more than $300 million a year in Federal funds because of this.

Who ends up paying? My constituents in Dade County and the State of Florida.

The bill instructs States to deny school lunches to undocumented immigrants. The chairman of the Dade County School Board said one-quarter of the children in the Dade schools were born in a foreign country. The Dade County schools would have to collect information from every single child in order to determine which ones can get subsidized lunches. The Republican majority is trying to balance the budget and cut taxes for the wealthy by creating local paperwork and higher local taxes. It is wrong and it is unfair for the Republican majority to force State and local governments to spend our taxpayers back home—paying for legal immigrant residents who are in this country because they complied with the immigration laws that previous Congresses have enacted.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this rule and against the conference report.

Mr. Solomon. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues just approached me, and they said they hope the American people that might be watching on C-SPAN would ask the question of all of us: Are you satisfied with the status quo?

That seems to be what I hear from the other side of the aisle, even though the President is going to sign this bill, that they are satisfied with the status quo. The people I represent are not satisfied with that status quo.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Erie, PA [Mr. English], one of the outstanding freshman Members of this body.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this rule and in strong support of this conference report, the most sweeping welfare reform legislation this country has seen since the Great Society.
As Franklin Delano Roosevelt warned in the late 1930s, giving permanent aid to anyone destroys them. By creating an underclass culture of poverty, dependency, and violence, we have been destroying the very people we have been trying to help. How many more families will be trapped in the current welfare system while we waste time in Washington?

I am delighted to see that the President has indicated he may support this conference report, which will require only a few days, and once again he has delivered a fair and workable rule to this body. Our Rules Committee worked diligently yesterday evening and this morning to accommodate both the strong desire of the majority of Americans that we end welfare as we know it—and the legitimate efforts that have been underway among Members of Congress and the administration to finalize the legislation. For that reason, we brought two rules, in order to give the conference as much time as possible to complete their work while getting welfare reform to the President this week. This rule allows the House to consider a milestone bill—one that lays to rest 30 years of big-government policies that have cost $5.5 trillion but failed to win the war on poverty. I must say I am disturbed by the hand-wringing and demagoguery that is emanating from some members of the minority. Their assurances that they are for the future, that they are for children, that they are opposed to this rule and this bill that they have opposed to this rule and this bill that they are for status quo. That is absolutely incorrect.

The people who are opposed to this bill are opposed to it because it puts another 1 million children into poverty and does not go far enough. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Sanibel, FL [Mr. Goss].

Mr. Goss. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this rule and this bill because we all know that the era of big government is indeed over. Those who say that they are for status quo and we must change the welfare system while we continue to modify what can be done. Let us move forward in a bipartisan way to continue to modify the program in a way that will allow all Americans a fighting chance to break out of poverty and become productive members of our society.

President, this legislation unleashes the creativity of our States and those who have compassion for those who can't. This is a balanced bill—and it's time for the defenders of the status quo to get with the program and heed the words of the President. Support this rule and the bill.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. Mr. Speaker, the chairman of the Rules Committee just said if people are opposed to this rule and this bill that they are for status quo. That is absolutely incorrect.

The people who are opposed to this bill are opposed to it because it puts another 1 million children into poverty and does not go far enough. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Claremont, CA, Mr. DAVID DREIER, my good friend and member of the Committee on Rules.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this rule and the conference report. The gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON] is absolutely right when he says that it is very easy to find things in this measure which we do not all support.

I admit I have some concerns about some provisions as they impact my state of California. The bottom line is this: the issue here is ending welfare as we know it. It is the President who has said he wanted to do when he was a candidate in 1992. My friend, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. MANZULI], just reminded me that it has gotten to the point where a Republican Congress has been able to do what a Democratic Congress did not do in the first 2 years of the President's term, and that is end welfare as we know it.

So, we have finally gotten to the point where we are looking at the fact that over the last 3 decades we have expended $5.3 trillion on welfare payments of all kinds and we have seen the poverty rate move from 14.7 percent to 15.1 percent. So everyone, Democrats and Republicans alike, as the gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON] just said, and the gentlewoman from Massachusetts [Mr. MOAKLEY], our friend from south Boston, acknowledges he does not want to support the status quo. So, we must change the welfare system.

Now, early today, when the chairman of the Subcommittee on Human
Resources, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. SHAW], was before the Committee on Rules, he talked about the fact that we will most likely, in the 105th Congress, need to make some sort of modification to this measure, but if we defeat it, the vote in the Senate to reform the welfare system will be a no welfare reform.

We have gotten a measure, and the President has finally gotten to the point where he has agreed to sign it. That is why, as my friend, the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. ROEMER], said, we need to move ahead with bipartisan support so we can try our darnedest to address a system which is broken.

There are many more things that need to be done. Entitlement reform is something that is important, so that we are not simply, as many are labeling this thing, attacking those who are less fortunate. We need to realize that this measure is designed not just to help those taxpayers who are shouldering the responsibility but also to do everything we can to help people get out of that generational cycle of dependence.

Support the rule and support the conference report.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

It has been referred to some people on my side as being for the status quo. Two weeks ago we voted for the Tanner-Castle bill, which was a reform bill. It had much more reform than this. So it is not that we are for the status quo. We want a real reform bill. This is not it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON].

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I think that the conference report will pass and, therefore, there will be reform because the majority of our Members truly think they are reforming the welfare reforming the system that we have in place that would ensure we were decreasing dependency, we would encourage work and we would be supportive to families. Those kind of structures are not present.

I know everyone has good intentions, and certainly reform is because we are trying to reduce a big deficit, because we know already the amount of money we spend on welfare is really insignificant to the total amount that we spend. If we wanted to reduce the budget, we would be reforming other things.

Like the gentleman has just said, entitlements would be that issue.

Hopefully, we can understand that those of us who will vote against this are really making a statement. We care about children too much to rob Paul to pay Peter. We are not willing to rob children of their opportunity and their future in order to provide other people an opportunity to live.

Also, we are about teenage pregnancy prevention, and yet this House last month had the opportunity just to appropriate $30 million to prevent teenage pregnancy. We know over a half million young people become pregnant every year. We spend annually $6.5 billion, yet we will not put a small amount of money to encourage young people to do the positive behavior activity so they will not lead a life of dependency.

We say we want to decrease dependency. We want to give kids stepping stones, but we put these stumbling blocks in their way. Mr. Speaker, this is not supportive of children, and I give Mr. Castle tremendous credit for his efforts in this conference bill, and I hope I am wrong, I hope I am wrong. I hope, indeed, millions of children do not suffer, but I could not vote in good conscience for a bill that I am not assured of that.

Reform means encouraging young people for support, decreasing dependency and making provisions for work. Vote against this conference bill.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Egan, IL, Mr. DON MANZULLO, an outstanding Member.

(Mr. MANZULLO asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MANZULLO. Mr. Speaker, in the last 31 years this country has spent over $5.4 trillion on the welfare system, and what do we have to show for it? We have generation after generation locked in a seemingly endless cycle of destitution and poverty. They are the lost forgotten statistics, dependent on the Federal entitlement trap that strips them of their dignity, destroys families, damages our work ethic, and destroys the self-esteem of those trapped in the system.

Cruelty is allowing this destructive system to continue. By passing this welfare reform bill we will restore hope and opportunity by making work, and not welfare, a way of life.

Our current welfare system has not only failed those in the system, but it has also failed those who have been supporting it, the hard working taxpayer. It has failed the forgotten American, the one who gets up in the morning, packs a lunch, sends the kids off to school. That person is working harder than ever to make ends meet, and the typical American family is paying over $3,400 a year in taxes for welfare payments to perpetuate a failed system.

Mr. Speaker, we should pass this bill and pass it now.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentlewoman from Kansas [Mrs. MEYERS], one of the truly outstanding Members of this body, who is retiring at the end of this year. She has been such a great Member, and we are going to miss her very much.

(Mrs. MEYERS of Kansas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MEYERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for those comments.

Mr. Speaker, I support this rule and urge my colleagues to support it. The Personal Responsibility Act is a good start toward reforming our welfare system. Because of the block grant, the entitlement nature of the program is ended.

We ask able-bodied people between 18 and 50 who receive food stamps to do work for the welfare check. We form the SSI program to help stop monthly checks from going to prisoners and checks that were going to healthy children. And we finally tell recent immigants that the promise of America does not automatically include welfare checks.

But many issues remain unaddressed, and I believe the most serious is the ever-increasing illegitimacy rate. In 1994, one-third of our children were born into homes where no father ever lived. And by the year 2000, 80 percent of minority children and 40 percent of all children in this country will be born out of wedlock.

Unfortunately, the conference report does nothing to require that fathers be identified. States who currently do nothing to identify fathers can continue to do nothing, and those States who continue to reward teenage pregnancy can continue to do so.

Finally, there is nothing to enforce a family cap, even though we know that the family cap has reduced a drop in additional children in New Jersey, where it is now statewide policy.

To repeat, this bill is a good start, but I believe we cannot reform our welfare system until we address the growth in illegitimacy. The link between our ever-increasing illegitimacy rates and the growth in AFDC rolls are not casual. They are cause and effect. Why is it too much to ask that children have two responsible adults as parents? Sadly, we continue to encourage the opposite.

A previous speaker said that the cost of welfare was very modest in this country. The cost of AFDC alone, I am not talking about illegitimacy, but only AFDC, the system that I am not assuring of that. States who continue to reward teenage pregnancy can continue to do so.

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A previous speaker said that the cost of welfare was very modest in this country. The cost of AFDC alone, I am not talking about illegitimacy, but only AFDC, is $70 billion a year because it is $16 billion a year AFDC, it is one-fourth of Medicaid, half of food stamps, about a third of housing plus all of the training and day care programs. It is between $70 and $80 billion a year.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. FATTAH].

Mr. FATTAH. Mr. Speaker, I rise in objection to the amendment. This rule and this bill, this conference committee, is built on the biggest lie that has ever been told to the American people, and that is that we are spending too much as a country to help poor people.

There is no calculation that any legitimate analysis of a Federal budget would tell us that we spent $5 trillion on the war on poverty. It is all made up out of whole cloth. It includes items like the Pell grants and all kinds of scholarship programs and education. The AFDC payments amount to little more than one penny out of every dollar that this Government spends to help poor children.
We have gotten everybody convinced that we are spending just too much money on poor people, and now we have convinced them that Speaker GINGRICH and the Republican majority are coming to help these poor children, that today's effort to truly help poor children, and cutting $60 billion is just the best way to help them find their way to the American dream.

This rule, this conference committee, the Washington Post in its editorial today said it was a bad idea. They said it was an effort of Washington to keep this country was headed. And there will be Members who will come to the floor today, because they want to be re-elected and will vote for it, but out into the future there will be days that they will truly regret that they did not have the courage to stand up and oppose this hideous proposal.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the former governor of Delaware, MIKE CASTLE, one of the people that actually knows best about the real problems or how this ought to be dealt with, and who knows that one of the reasons the welfare system in this country has failed miserably is because we inside the beltway have tried to dictate to the States and local governments.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I support the rule and the bill. We stand today at a historic divide, a defining moment that separates the past from the future; one which pits personal responsibility, work, and State flexibility against the largely failed welfare policies and practices of the past. Today marks a turning point for all of us—the Congress, our constituents, and perhaps most importantly, those welfare recipients.

Just as our Nation was formed, we stand ready to forward a bold experiment in reforming our Nation's welfare system. But like most experiments, we will most certainly have to re-visit our decisions. Though we have tried, there may not be enough resources for children's care, or, inequitably fund the work program that is the cornerstone of this legislation. There most likely will be economic downturns that force Governors and the Congress to reevaluate. States may require more flexibility in meeting the stringent work requirements. There are innumerable potential pitfalls.

As a coauthor of the bipartisan Castle-Tanner welfare reform proposal, JOHNNY TANNER and I have helped forward some very positive changes and provisions that will help shape reform welfare for the better.

Perhaps the most important provision I helped make is the one that guarantees Medicaid eligibility to all welfare recipients, and those who may be eligible in the future. The food stamp optional block grant and the child welfare block grant were dropped, thus retaining minimum Federal standards and preserving these national safety nets.

Protecting children in families that lose cash assistance is a high priority. Although I would have preferred mandatory in-kind assistance after a 5-year time limit on cash assistance, I am mostly satisfied that a provision could be added that would ensure that States can utilize Federal funds from the social services block grant for the care of the child. Furthermore, we were successful in ensuring that a higher State maintenance of effort on State spending could be included in the conference report. We also were successful in including language that would require that Congress re-review in 3 years the work program to ensure its success. Last, Castle-Tanner has had a moderating impact on the burdens that the nonprofit organizations will put on our Nation's future citizens, primarily in the health care area.

While Castle-Tanner included stronger protections for children and families under the child block grant, increased funding for the welfare-to-work programs, significantly smaller food stamp cuts, and less severe immigrant cuts, its fingerprints can be readily identifiable on this conference report.

Nevertheless, on balance, we have achieved what we can all support. With this legislation we have finally begun the process by which America's underclass problem can be solved, and break a generational cycle and culture of dependency and poverty.

Congress is now the shepherd of welfare reform, not the President, and it is up to us to review and improve upon this proposal. I, for one, stand ready and committed to revisit this, if need be, to make sure welfare reform is going to work.

Mr. Speaker, we stand today at a historic divide, a defining moment that separates the past from the future; one which pits personal responsibility, work, and State flexibility against the largely failed welfare policies and practices of the past. Today marks a turning point for all of us—the Congress, our constituents, and perhaps most importantly, those welfare recipients.

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Nevertheless, on balance, we have achieved what we can all support. With this legislation, we have finally begun the process by which America's underclass problem can be solved, and break a generational cycle and culture of dependency and poverty.

This is not a perfect experiment, but then experiments usually aren't. Congress is now the shepherd of welfare reform—not the President—and it is up to us to review and improve upon this proposal. I, for one, stand ready and committed to revisit this as it is implemented, and as we gain empirical evidence that our effort can be successful in making work pay more than welfare. We will be truly able to say that we have "ended welfare as we know it." It's worth taking some risks to end it.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. CLYBURN].

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the conference agreement. Being a slightly better opponent than the House-passed version of the bill does not mean this is a good piece of legislation.

Welfare should be a temporary transition from welfare to work. Unfortunately, this is 1996, an election year, and we have entered the "silly season."

Rather than being a constructive debate, the welfare reform debate has become, for the most part silly talk of budgetary savings and time limits—not helping those in need.

I think the designers of this legislation have forgotten a valuable lesson: If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day but if you teach that man how to fish, he can feed himself for a lifetime.

This conference report would consist of a check for 2 years and then a requirement for work programs for only 50 percent of those leaving welfare payments—6 years from now.

The Republicans have forgotten the parable about feeding a family for a lifetime but instead have decided that it is much cheaper to write a check to a welfare family than provide the necessary training to ensure that another check never has to be written to that family.

And under the guise of welfare reform even these checks are becoming smaller. Under this conference agreement, unlike this conference agreement, the average annual cut per food stamp household in South Carolina would be $265, and this cut would grow to $394 by 2002. Under the Senate version of the bill, food stamp households in South Carolina stand to lose even more. While it is not clear what the actual cut would be for South Carolina families under the conference agreement, it is certain that any vulnerable households would be between the proverbial rock and a hard place with little or no hope of any training to help them lift themselves permanently out of poverty.

With the talk of personal responsibility being tossed around, I find it ironic that at the same time our Nation's most vulnerable families are being required to do more for themselves, our States are being asked to do even less.

In this conference agreement, unlike the Tanner-Castle substitute bill I supported earlier this month, States are required to spend only 75 percent of what they spent in 1994 in return for a block grant check from the Federal Government. At the same time, it is projected that as a result of this legislation 8,170 children in my state of South Carolina will be pushed into poverty.

I would ask my colleagues not to support this agreement. Although it may be the lesser of two evils, it is not the best we can do nor is it the best we can afford to do.
Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE].

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the first thing I say today is to get in the well of the House and hit your gavel down and say I am against the deadbeat on welfare, and I am right with you for welfare reform. As America watches those of us who have a difference of opinion, will get castigated and accused as supporting those who would not work. But I come today to oppose this rule.

I hope that those who have goodwill and understand what America is all about will realize that I believe in welfare reform but I do not believe in putting 1 million children in the streets. I do not believe in a weak work program where States will not have the work to give to those who are on welfare. I do not believe in a shortened contingency fund of the 5 years to the States where those who have not been able to bridge themselves out of welfare will not have the support that they need. I do not believe in sending legal immigrants into war, but yet when they need a helping hand this Nation will say you can fight for us but we do not have any support for you and your children. I do not believe in dispossessing the disabled. I do not believe in denying SSI benefits to 300,000 children.

Oh, we could be politic today and many will do that. But it does not matter to me because there are people in this country who need our help. This is a bad welfare reform. Vote against it.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, if my colleagues want to take child abuse out of the welfare families, the best thing to do is to bring these people up out of the poverty system and given them meaningful jobs. That is what this legislation is meant to do.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. WELDON]. Someone I am very proud of because he gave up a very lucrative medical practice to come here and try to do something for America.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman for yielding, and it has been a pleasure for me to be here and advocate for the citizens in my district, who have been calling out for welfare reform for many years.

Mr. Chairman, they know that the current welfare system is broken. The people know that the rate of poverty has not decreased since welfare has been enacted. The average stay on welfare is 13 years, and today illegitimacy rates among many welfare families approach 50 percent.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the bill, and strong support of this rule. H.R. 734 will finally end welfare as we know it.

It did not take a Republican Congress to end welfare as we know it. This bill makes welfare a helping hand, not a lifetime handout. It places 5-year limits on collecting AFDC benefits. For hardship cases States can exempt 20 percent from the 5-year limit, and able-bodied people must work after 2 years or lose their benefits.

It cuts taxpayer financed welfare for nonworking families, and returning power and flexibility to the States. It ends numerous redundancies within the welfare system by giving block grants to the States. It cuts taxpayer financed welfare for moving families from welfare to work.

It seeks to halt the rising illegitimacy rates. Moms are encouraged to find the father of their children. Parents who have risk losing benefits by 25 percent. It increases efforts to make deadbeat dads pay child support. And these, of course, are men who father children but then have shirked their financial responsibility for caring for them.

It gives cash rewards to the top five States who show the most successful improvement in reducing illegitimacy. As we know, fatherlessness is linked to high juvenile crime rates, high drug abuse, and declining educational performance. Support the rule and support the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3734 the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act. This historic welfare reform bill will end welfare as we know it. During the past 30 years, taxpayers have spent $5 trillion on failed welfare programs. What kind of return have the taxpayers received on their investment? The rate of poverty has not decreased at all. Furthermore, the average length of stay on welfare is 7 years. Today's illegitimacy rate among welfare families is almost 50 percent and crime continues to run rampant. Current programs have encouraged dependency, trapped people in unsafe housing, and saddled the poor with rules that are antithetic to their family. Clearly, those trapped in poverty and the taxpayers deserve better.

This bill overhauls our broken welfare system. This plan makes sure welfare is not a way of life; stresses work not welfare; stops welfare to felons and most noncitizens; restores power and flexibility to the States; and offers States incentives to halt the rise in illegitimacy.

By imposing a 5-year lifetime limit for collecting AFDC, this bill guarantees that welfare is a helping hand, not a lifetime handout. Recognizing the need for helping true hardship cases, States would be allowed to exempt up to 20 percent of their caseload from the 5-year limit. In addition, H.R. 3734 for the first time ever requires able bodied welfare recipients to work for their benefits. Those who can work must do so within 2 years or lose benefits. States will be required to have at least 50 percent of their welfare recipients working by 2002. To help families make the transition from welfare to work, the legislation provides $4.5 billion more than current law for child care.

Under this bill future entrants into this country will no longer be eligible for most welfare programs during their first 5 years in the United States. Felons will not be eligible for welfare benefits, and State and local jails will be given incentives to report felons who are skipping the rules and receiving welfare benefits.

Our current system has proven that the one-size-fits-all welfare system does not work. H.R. 3734 will give more power and flexibility to the States by ending the entitlement status of numerous welfare programs by block granting the money to the States. No longer will States spend countless hours filling out the required bureaucratic forms hoping to receive a waiver from Washington to implement their welfare program. States will also be rewarded for moving families from welfare to work.

Finally, this bill addresses the problem of illegitimacy in several ways. H.R. 3734 authorizes a cash reward for the five States most successful in reducing illegitimacy. It also strengthens child support enforcement provisions and requires States to reduce assistance by 25 percent to individuals who do not cooperate in establishing paternity. Lastly, this bill mandates an appropriation grant of $50 million annually to fund abstinence education programs combating teenage pregnancy and illegitimacy.

The sad state of our current welfare system and the cycles of poverty and hopelessness it perpetuates are of great concern to me. I believe this bill goes to the heart of reforming the welfare system by encouraging and helping individuals in need become responsible for themselves and their family. I wholeheartedly support this bill because it makes welfare a helping hand in times of trouble, not a hand out that becomes a way of life. I truly believe that this reform will give taxpayers a better return on their investment in helping those in need.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maine [Mr. LONGLEY], another outstanding new Member of this body. I particularly like him because he is a former Marine.

(Mr. LONGLEY asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LONGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON], chair of the Committee on Rules, and also members of the committee for bringing this important legislation to the floor, bringing this rule to the floor. This has been delayed far too long.

This is a bill that is about child abuse. It is drug abuse. It is crime and violence and the fact that, for too many Americans who are trapped in this system, the American dream has become the American nightmare.

I do not argue with the fact that the welfare system is a handout to those who need it. But for too many it has become a prison. This is about women and children who are suffering under this system as well as the social workers and the law enforcement officers who are forced to deal with the ramifications of the aspects of the system that do not work.

Mr. Speaker, for too long we have been delaying this. We have delayed this vote for most of the day. The fact of the matter is that welfare reform is at the door. It has been knocking for...
almost 30 years, and it is finally here today. This afternoon, hopefully, it will be voted on and we will send it to a President who will endorse it. I think that is a tremendous accomplishment for the people of this country. I yield one minute to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. SMITH], an outstanding Member who has dealt with the immigration problem in this country.

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the rule and the bill. Immigration has been America's nightmare. In the past, we have been here. If they have been here 4 years. We have been relatively new Member of Congress. I have not had time to look at it. I am a relative new Member of Congress. I have not read the bill by now and have not been following the debate, that is not the fault of the Republican Congress.

The second reason they say that is that welfare does not cost that much. If you add in all the Federal Government spending on welfare it is $345 billion, which is ore than we spend on defense. I am not sure what they consider money if $345 billion is not. We spent $3 trillion since LBJ's Great Society programs, and that is enough money. That is more than we spent on World War II.

The final reason they are saying is that it is cruel to children. Nothing is more cruel than having a welfare system that traps children in poverty, that makes children and families break up, that makes them live in housing projects where the dad cannot be at home, where there is high drug use, where there are teenage dropout rates and teenage drug abuse, I do not see why they think that is compassion.

Our program sends 4 billion more on child care than the Democrat proposal. And that is using their frame of thinking that is more compassion than what they have. Welfare reform is family friendly. Welfare should not be a life sentence. That society gives people a temporary helping hand, not a permanent handout, not a hammock forever to swing in but a temporary safety net so that people can get back into the socioeconomic mainstream and enjoy the American dream just like the rest of us.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by reminding my colleagues of one very important fact. Today 9 million children depend upon Aid to Families With Dependent Children for their survival. When we are talking about reforming welfare, we are talking about these 9 million American children, and we need to be very, very careful on what changes we make.

Mr. Speaker, this is not to say that I am opposed to welfare reform. In fact, I am very much in favor of welfare reform. I have seen too many children growing up surrounded by violence. I have seen too many fathers completely abandon their responsibilities. And I have seen too many single mothers too dejected and overwhelmed to look for jobs.

These days being poor is not what it used to be. It used to be that families stuck together. It used to be if you worked hard enough you could support your family. But, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately times have changed.

I agree with the editorial in the August 12 issue of the New Republic which says that, although our current welfare system may not have created the current underclass, it certainly sustains it. I agree that welfare reform is one of the most important issues that we can take up in this Congress. Today's Boston Globe says that under this bill, poverty will grow with welfare done on the cheap. We need to be very careful, Mr. Speaker, how we change AFDC and not do it on the cheap.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, is not the way to do it. I hoped that after this bill came out of conference, I would be able to support it. But after looking at it, I cannot because, I cannot vote for a bill that will push 1 million additional children below the poverty level. I cannot vote for a bill that may not guarantee health care to poor children and a conference committee that cuts food stamps. I cannot vote for a bill that will provide no protection for bad times. If there is a recession, millions of people will be completely destitute. And, Mr. Speaker, I cannot vote for a bill that allows States to take at least one-half of their Federal money and spend it on something other than children.

This Gingrich welfare bill, Mr. Speaker, is too tough on children. It is weak on work, and it is soft on deadbeat parents. Mr. Speaker, as he said, two out of every three people on welfare is a child, and we have a responsibility to those children. We have a responsibility to make sure that under circumstances where they might be hurt. We have a responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, to make sure that their health and their safety is placed far above any jockeying for political advantage.

So I urge my colleagues to oppose this rule and oppose the conference committee bill and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. S. Solomon. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, did I hear the gentleman right when he said, the Gingrich welfare bill? Is that not strange? I thought it was the Gingrich-Clinton welfare bill, because the President has just announced he is going to sign the bill. Mr. Speaker, colleagues, I would just say to you, what is compassionate locking poor people into a lifetime of welfare dependency? That is what this debate is all about. If you are really sincere, if you really care about poor people in America, do something for them. Change the status quo which has failed miserably.

I see my good friend, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. STENHOLM], sitting over here, came here with me 18 years ago. He came before the Committee on Rules about an hour or so ago and he said exactly, this a bipartisan bill. He said, we Democrats have had input to it. It is a compromise. It is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, what I was hearing is, no more ifs, ands and buts. This is the compromise. This is step in the right direction we need to move in.

Let us vote for this bill now. Vote for the rule and the bill and let us get on with trying to change the welfare system in America for the good of the people.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.
The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The Speaker pro tempore. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

Pursuant to clause 5 of rule XV, the Chair will reduce to 5 minutes the minimum period of time within which a vote by electronic device, if ordered, will be taken on the question of agreeing to the resolution.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 259, nays 164, not voting 10, as follows:

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The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, on that the ayes and nays were—yeas 259, nays 164, not voting 10, as follows:

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Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. Tanner].

(Mr. TANNER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, I am happy today for several reasons. I think Congress has come together with the administration to take a step forward on certainly what is a pressing national social problem. That is welfare reform. We started out, as the previous speaker said, almost 2 years ago, to try to bring together something that could be signed and enacted into law so we could actually change the system that is broken, according to everyone who has observed it, and actually do something about it now.

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thank the gentleman from Delaware, Mike Castle, who came together with me to put together something that would be bipartisan so we could get off of this partisan gridlock that we have been suffering from.

Mr. Speaker, as someone who has advocated a ‘tough love’ approach to welfare reform, this goes a long way toward reforming our broken welfare system as we return the system to its original purpose—a temporary safety net, not a way of life.

Furthermore, as a pioneer in the battle to also reform children’s support enforcement system, I am very pleased to see that the reforms I have been pushing for almost 4 years now—which represent the heart and soul of the U.S. Interstate Commission on Child Support and Enforcement—have finally been included in the package before us today.

Ensuring that these child support enforcement reforms were included in this bill acknowledges what I’ve been saying for years: Effective reform of our interstate child support enforcement laws must be an integral component of any welfare reform plan that the 104th Congress sent to President Clinton.

Research has found that somewhere between 25 and 40 percent of welfare costs go to support mothers and children who fall onto the welfare rolls precisely because these mothers are not receiving the legal, court-ordered support payments to which they are rightfully entitled.

With the current system spending such a large portion of funding on these mothers, children are the first victims, and the taxpayers who have to support these families are the last victims.

The plan before us also puts teeth into the laws that require unwed mothers to establish paternity of their children at the hospital, thereby laying the groundwork for claiming responsibility for them. The current law

The most important difference between the conference agreement and the two bills that have previously been voted on is that it would protect innocent children. This bill no longer treats a 4-year-old child like he or she is a 24-year-old irresponsible adult. To me that was critical. That is not a part of welfare reform. That is just bad, counterproductive public policy. This bill has done that.

I once again thank the Republican conferees for their hard work, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. Shaw] and others. I also urge a ‘yes’ vote. Let us make a better, healthier day for our children.

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from New Jersey [Mrs. Roukema].

(Mrs. Roukema asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. ROUKEMA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation, and want to associate myself with the statement of the chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. Roberts], particularly as it

The proposal before us today reforms a welfare system that has trapped millions in a safety net, not a way of life.

Given that I was deeply concerned about giving a blank check to the Governors for the Food Stamp Program would result in innocent children going hungry, I opposed the House plan last week.

But again I am very pleased to see that, once again, the Senate has saved the House of Representatives from itself by rejecting this proposal, and successfully retaining its position on this issue in the final bill.

Additionally, this legislation does take a modest step in the right direction by allowing States to use their social welfare block grant funds—to provide families on welfare with vouchers—instead of cash benefits—to pay for essential services needed by the family, that is, medicine, baby food, diapers, school supplies—if a State has terminated the family’s cash welfare benefits as part of its sanction program.

This is the right thing to do because even if a welfare recipient is playing by all of the rules and has not found a job when the time limits become effective, the use of vouchers for services plays an important role in helping the family and its children keep their head above the water line.

There should be no question that we must enact strong welfare reform legislation this year. The American people are correctly demanding that we restore the notion of individual responsibility and self-reliance to a system that has run amok over the past 20 years.

Although I have strongly supported some welfare reforms that have been described as ‘tough love’ measures for several years now, I want to reiterate that my goal has always been to require self-reliance and responsibility, while ensuring that innocent children do not go hungry and homeless as a result of any Federal action.

Finally, I am most supportive of the improvements the conference gave to the Medicaid Program. This is an enlightened and humane response to genuine medical needs.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is not perfect. But, it represents the first major reform of our broken-down welfare system in generations. We have been given a historic opportunity to do it right. And I trust we will not squander. We owe no less to our children. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for final passage of this monumental reform package.

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. Camp asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the conference agreement.

Today, the Congress is again presented with the opportunity to adopt meaningful welfare reform. Over the past 19 months, my colleagues and I have written, debated, and adopted proposals to reform our current welfare system. Our efforts, however, were twice vetoed by the President.

Since launching the war on poverty in 1965, over $5 trillion has been spent to eliminate poverty in America. Some 31 years later and despite billions and billions of dollars, poverty in America has worsened and our children are growing and maturing in an environment with little hope and opportunity.

The proposal before us today reforms a welfare system that has trapped millions in a...
cycle of poverty. Our current welfare system punishes families and children by rewarding irresponsibility, illegitimacy and destroying self-esteem. For too long, the Federal Government has defended the current system and turned away as millions of families and children became trapped in a cycle of despair, dependence, and stagnation.

This bill accomplishes several important goals. First, it time limits welfare to 5 years. The Federal and State governments have an obligation to assist those in need but our current system has become a way of life instead of a temporary helping hand for those experiencing hard times.

Second, our bill requires work. The Washington welfare system has also robbed recipients of their self-esteem by merely providing a check. This proposal requires each recipient to work for their benefits, thereby instilling the pride of employment and allowing each recipient to earn a paycheck. This sense of accomplishment and independence increases the individual's self-esteem and often influences the children who can see firsthand the benefits of a strong work ethic. For those continuing to experience hard times, however, the bill allows States to exempt up to 20 percent of the welfare caseload from the time limit.

Most importantly, our bill helps those families and individuals working to improve their lives. We are working for child care and those continuing to experience hard times, however, the bill allows States to exempt up to 20 percent of the welfare caseload from the time limit.

 Compassion is not the sole property of Washington and our bill creates a Federal-State partnership in meeting the needs of welfare recipients. States will have the power and opportunity to design and implement new innovative programs that best meet the needs of residents. I urge my colleagues to support the conference report.

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Florida [Mr. Shaw] be allowed to control the time and to yield.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Riggs). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan? There was no objection.

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California [Ms. WOOLSEY], a member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, we all agree that the welfare system does not work for the welfare recipients and for the taxpayers. The challenge for lawmakers is to improve the system so we can invest in getting families off welfare and into jobs that pay a liveable wage, and also to answer the "what ifs". What if a mother on welfare finds a job? What if she is not earning enough to take care of her family? What if she cannot find child care for her 6-year-old?

Unfortunately, this conference report will not ensure families can live on the jobs that they get. That they will earn a liveable wage, and this conference has made sure that it does not answer our "what ifs". It kicks families off of assistance, even if parents are trying hard to find a job. It does not even invest in the education and training programs that recipients need to get jobs that pay an actual liveable wage.

Even though the House and Senate agreed that single parents with kids under 11 should not leave their children alone if there is no child care, the majority went ahead without discussion and lowered that age to under 6.

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. STENHOLM].

Mr. STENHOLM asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this conference report. In doing so, I want to pay particular thanks to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. Shaw] for making this an inclusive conference, at least from the perspective of those of us on this side of the aisle, and also the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. McCrery] and the gentleman from Kansas [Ms. Meyers].

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 1/2 minutes to the gentleman from Delaware [Mr. Castle].

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for his remarks. As a Delawarean, I am a prounionist. I do not want to especially mention from the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities, the gentleman from California [Mr. Cunningham], the gentleman from Delaware [Mr. Castle], the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. Hutchinson], the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. Talent], and the gentlewoman from Kansas [Ms. Meyers].

I strongly support the legislation. I urge all to vote for it because at last long last addressed the tremendous problem of out-of-wedlock births and absentee fathers.

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I commend all those who have worked so hard to bring about welfare reform effort. I want to especially mention from the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities, the gentleman from California [Mr. Cunningham], the gentleman from Delaware [Mr. Castle], the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. Hutchinson], the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. Talent], and the gentlewoman from Kansas [Ms. Meyers]. I strongly support the legislation. I urge all to vote for it because at last long last addressed the tremendous problem of out-of-wedlock births and absentee fathers.

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from getting it, it makes it much more workable.

For States like mine, Texas, Utah, Michigan, and others that have already begun experimenting with work programs, this bill, I believe, allows those States that are implementing welfare waivers to go forward with those efforts. Specifically, the States would have been required to change the current system and preferable to welfare legislation considered earlier.

For these reasons I support the welfare reform conference report. I am extremely pleased that the President has agreed with that sentiment and say that in virtually all cases. I think that conversations with officials from their own States would lead them to supporting this waiver provision.

I am convinced that these various State plans are the best experiments for determining how to put people to work. Frankly, I think the State plans generally are more realistic about the work requirements and are more solidly grounded in the possible, rather than the hypothetical.

Some of us around here have gotten carried away with our rhetoric about being tough on work by getting into a bidding war over who can have work requirements that sound tougher. Our rhetoric about being tough on work has led us to impose work requirements in this bill that virtually no State can implement.

The only work requirements that are meaningful are the work requirements that actually can be met by States. When I have said that previous welfare reform bills were weak on work, I have meant that the bills would not give States the resources to put welfare recipients into work.

The mandates in the bill passed by the House would force States such as Texas to make changes in the plans passed by the State legislature or the severe penalties from the Federal Government.

The important State waiver change included in the conference report gives States necessary additional flexibility in implementing programs to move welfare recipients to work even if they don’t meet the mandates in this bill. The additional flexibility that this bill gives to States in developing work programs will reduce the pressure on States to cut benefits or restrict eligibility for assistance in order to meet the work requirements of the bill. The Congressional Budget Office has reported that States would be forced to tighten eligibility for assistance to needy families or by reducing the size of benefits in order to offset the unfunded mandates. Members who are concerned about the impact that welfare reform will have on children should strongly support giving States this flexibility and reducing the unfunded mandates.

Despite some reservations I have about this conference report. I believe it is critical that welfare reform be enacted this year. Failure to do so will signal yet another wasted opportunity to make critically needed reforms. We should enact this conference report and fix the current system now, moving towards a system that better promotes work and individual responsibility.

Mr. Shaw. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Nevada [Mr. ENSIGN], a valued member of the Subcommittee on Human Services of the Committee on Ways and Means.

[Mr. ENSIGN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.]

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding the time, and I thank him for all the work he has done on behalf of the welfare recipients in the country.

Mr. Speaker, today is truly independence day for welfare recipients. It is the first day to redefine compassion in America. In Las Vegas, we have a program known as Opportunity Village. It is an incredible program for the mentally disabled. The primary premise for the program is that it is compassionate enough to care about mentally disabled people to where the community works together to find these people.

It is an incredible situation to walk down there and to see the joy that these people have in being able to work every day so that they do not become a drain on society. They feel good about themselves. Today is the first day welfare recipients are going to start feeling good about themselves, and the children are going to start feeling good about their parents.

My mom, when I was young, was divorced, supporting three kids, with little money and no child support. I watched her every single day get up and go to work. She taught me a work ethic that has carried through my entire life with myself and my brother and sister. We have raised our children with this ethic.

This bill starts giving that work ethic back to the American people.

The Wall Street Journal did a poll. Ninety-five percent of all presidents of companies had their first job by the time they were 12 years of age. Compassion, work ethic, today; vote for this bill.

Ms. Waters. Mr. Speaker, someday more politicians will approach tough decisions such as welfare reform with more care and integrity. This is not that day. Someday politicians will place children above politics. This is not that day.

Too many Democrats and Republicans will run for reelection on this so-called welfare reform legislation. The truth is this bill does nothing to train mothers for work, to develop jobs, to help recipients become independent. This bill is welfare fraud, not welfare reform. This bill penalizes poor working families and will drive more children into poverty. It will reveal the shame of what happened this day, and only history will record the blatant lack of courage to simply do the right thing.

Mr. Sabo. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. MEEK].

[Ms. MEEK of Florida asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.]

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. MEEK].

Let no one fool you. This bill is not about reforming welfare. It is not about that. It is about saving money and trying your very best to influence
the American public that we have balanced the budget. I would not mind this. I want to see welfare reform. But this is not the way to do it. What we are doing here is hurting children. Every time I stand here, I talk about that. Children are all children. The conference report did much worse than the Senate. You allow the States, and I come from a State that will, you are allowing a State to cut 25 percent of their 1994 spending levels without any penalty. If Florida legislature gets ready to cut, they are going to cut this particular program. The parents of children ages 6 to 11 will have to work without assurance of child care at all. Who is going to take care of the children? Are they going to run all over the world and get into trouble? Yes. The transfer of funds from transfer assistance to work, the Senate bill did better than that. The conference bill allows unfettered. I am hoping that people listen to this bill because what this conference bill does is worse than the Senate bill and it should not be passed. Mr. Speaker, this is a travesty to the American public.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Mrs. JOHNSON], a distinguished member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut. I thank the gentleman from Florida for yielding me the time and commend him on his extraordinary leadership now over 4 years in getting this bill to the President.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is about work, responsibility, hope, and opportunity. I wish I had the time here today to answer some of the concerns that have been raised about day care and jobs and all of those things. I think this bill addresses them. But I would like to discuss two issues that have not received much attention but are integral to our underlying goal of helping families become self-sufficient: Child support enforcement and food stamps.

First, I am very pleased to say that this bill retains current eligibility standards for families on Medicaid. All families now on Medicaid will continue to get Medicaid. Furthermore, all families in the future that meet today's criteria will continue to get Medicaid even if their State redefines their welfare program with more constricted criteria. Regarding the Medicaid transition period, under current law when a family leaves the welfare rolls to work, they are guaranteed 1 year's transitional Medicaid benefit. In the future, this will be absolutely true. We retain current eligibility standards. However, we are enabling families to go to work without worrying about losing their medical benefit.

Second, this bill contains landmark child support provisions. Today in America 3.7 million custodial parents are poor; of those 3.7 million, fully three-quarters receive no child support. Of those who have child support orders in place, only 13 percent of the women, only 40 percent receive the payment they should receive. This is catastrophic for women and children, and this bill fixes that system, an enormous advance for women and children and a welfare reform.

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentlewoman from Florida [Mrs. THURMAN].

Mrs. THURMAN. I thank the gentleman from Minnesota for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my friends from the other side of the aisle for their wisdom in adopting the position of the bipartisan Castle-Tanner coalition in maintaining the Federal commitment to food stamps.

My colleagues were right to eliminate the optional block grant that would have led to two hungry families with children. They were right to modify the Kasich food stamp amendment in favor of a provision that provides assistance to laid-off and downsized workers.

Of course, I still believe it would have been more beneficial if this bill realized that people who cannot find jobs still need to eat. But my colleagues have come a long way, and it is significant improvement over the first attempt at welfare reform. I am happy that my friends from the other side of the aisle listened to us and made these important changes along with others such as Medicaid coverage and vouchers. I look forward to the opportunity for us to continue in a bipartisan spirit to look at the future of these programs and to ensure that people that we are trying to help to get to work are able to do so.

My colleagues so aptly put in a provision so that we do a review every 3 years. We need to make sure we follow through with that.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the distinguished gentlesman from Florida [Mr. BILIRAKIS], a valued member of the Committee on Commerce.

Mr. BILIRAKIS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, as representatives of the people we do not get as many opportunities as we would like to do something that would truly help improve the lives of the people we serve. This bill presents us with just such an opportunity. This conference report is more than just a prescription for much needed welfare reform; however, it is what I hope will be the first step in our bipartisan efforts to improve the public assistance programs and ensure which disadvantaged families depend.

After all, welfare as we know it means more than AFDC. It includes food stamps, housing assistance and energy assistance, and it includes medical assistance. That is right. For millions of Americans, Medicaid is welfare. That is because income assistance alone is not sufficient to meet the pressing needs of disadvantaged families.

For States, too, Medicaid is welfare. In fact, it makes up the largest share of State public assistance funding. As a share of State budgets, Medicaid is four times larger than AFDC.

If President Clinton does the right thing and signs this welfare reform bill into law, Medicaid will still be caught up in the choking bureaucratic red tape of Federal control, and that is why the Medicaid Program must be restructured if States are to fully succeed in making public assistance programs more responsible and effective.

Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their commitment to true welfare reform, and I look forward to continuing our efforts to making all sources of public assistance work better for those in need of a helping hand.

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. JACKSON].

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this deadly and Draconian piece of garbage which will do nothing to reform the conditions of poverty and unemployment suffered by our Nation's most vulnerable.

As I listen to the debate on the floor of this body today, I felt compelled to make clear to the American people exactly what this bill will do to our Nation's families and our Nation's future. Despite the deceptive rhetoric that we have heard on the floor today, let us be clear—this bill strips away the 60-year guarantee of a basic human safety net for our Nation's poorest and most vulnerable children and their families.

The President and many Members of the 104th Congress have decided to cut welfare as they know it—to children, immigrants and the poorest Americans—but they have left intact welfare as we know it—welfare to America's largest corporations. We cannot and must not balance the budget on the backs of the least of these.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard Members on this floor urge support of this deadly measure, cloaking its defense in terms like "This is for the good of the poor." How can this be anything but bad for the poor, when we know that in my Home State of Illinois alone, 55,800 children will be pushed below the poverty line as a result of this bill, and 1.3 million children will be similarly impacted nationwide.

Please know, Mr. Speaker, that I will not join demopublicans and republicrats in this mean-spirited attack. You can rest assured that I will work to continue to provide equal protection under the law for our Nation's poor, our disabled, our immigrants and our children. Posturing tough on welfare mothers is viewed as good politics at least by a press
corps that admires cynicism. But ending welfare as I know it is a good idea if done well. So before you push more poor kids and their mothers out on the streets let's apply "Two Years and You're Off!" to dependent corporations and find a real jobs program for all Americans. Perhaps conservativesRepublicans and Democrats—need a new posture. Presidents should begin to beat up on the welfare king for a change.

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from New York [Mrs. MALONEY].

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, this conference report is dangerous and unrealistic. I do not believe the American people will tolerate a policy of ending support to a single mom who has played by the rules, tried to find a job for 2 years and could not.

Our unemployment rate is over 5 percent, and that does not include millions of welfare recipients. This conference report does not require the Government create jobs. The result will be the world's wealthiest nation putting families out on the street to fend for themselves. Will we tolerate destitution and call it reform?

Republicans say the States will solve these problems. Already Philadelphia, as reported yesterday in the paper, has stopped providing shelter beds for single homeless people due to Federal and State welfare cuts. I am not predicting that Republican welfare reform will put people right on the street. I am pointing out that it already has.

Oppose this conference report.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Delaware [Mr. CASTLE], who has done a great deal in this conference in bringing the two sides together.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I cannot thank the gentleman from Florida [Mr. SHAW] enough. At a time when somebody had to listen, he did. We do not always sit in this building, and it is just a tremendous honor to him that we are passing this bill today.

I thank the gentleman from Tennessee, Congressman JOHN TANNER, not a finer person to work with I know in the House, who acted in a bipartisan way when I think we needed that in order to bring this bill into line.

I thank the President, who I understand is going to sign this legislation. I believe he is doing the right thing for a variety of reasons.

I believe the safety net was put back into place that we have talked about in several ways in the area of Medicaid, food stamps, and the ability of States to set up voucher systems after 5 years. I think they can deal with that.

I have been strong in my fight for welfare reform for 12 years now, that this is the opportunity. Everyone talks about this in a very draconian sense. I believe this is opportunity for work, for education, in some instances for marriage and for families. It is opportunity because we are going to take people who have not had a true chance to live the American life in terms of their education and background and we are giving them that chance.

It is an experiment. We may have to come back to it, but I congratulate everybody.

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. CLEYBURN].

Mr. CLEYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for yielding me this time.

Mrs. MINK. Mr. Speaker, 2 years and you are out is not a bad proposition in and of itself, but in this bill it relies on that tried-and-true adage if you give a man a fish you may feed him for a day, if you teach a man how to fish he may feed himself for a lifetime.

In this bill, Mr. Speaker, only 50 percent of those 2 years-and-you-are-outers can reasonably expect any chance at training. In this era of personal responsibility, this legislation asks our most vulnerable citizens to do more, but our States are being required to do less.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the best we can do, and it is not the best we can afford. I urge a no vote.

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished new mom from Arkansas, Mrs. LINCOLN.

(Mrs. LINCOLN asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time and for his kind remarks.

I think we can find that no one will argue that our welfare system needs changed and today we have the opportunity to pass legislation that will hopefully move our Nation's low-income citizens from passively accepting a welfare check to actively earning a paycheck.

Welfare reform has been one of my top priorities since first coming to Congress, especially reform of the SSI disability program or the crazy check problem.

I have worked diligently with members of the Blue Dog Coalition, with the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Human Resources, the task force, and with Members of both sides of the aisle to find a reasonable solution to those who truly need SSI assistance and welfare reform, hoping we can crack down on the abuse in the system while making provisions for those who need it.

Although this conference report is not a perfect bill, it represents a significant advancement over our status quo. No one should get something for nothing, and if the American people are going to be generous with their tax dollars, they should get something in return.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation provides responsible reform through the three main goals we started with: State flexibility, personal responsibility, and work. I urge my colleagues to support this provision, a lot of hard work in a bipartisan spirit.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. GOODLATTE].

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, for his fine work on this bill, and I rise in strong support of the welfare reform conference report.

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Hawaii [Mrs. MINK].

Mrs. MINK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member of the Committee on the Budget for yielding me this time.

I intend to vote against this conference report. The Urban Institute tells us that over a million children will be put into poverty as a result of this legislation. We are told by our own Republican Congressional Budget Office that it is underfunded insofar as the promise of any assistance in finding jobs.

If we indeed want our people on welfare to go to work, is it not fair to expect that there will be dollars there to provide them jobs, not to cut them adrift after 2 years without any cash support, whatsoever.

That is what the consequence of this bill will do. It will force people out on the streets, literally, with no cash assistance whatsoever and without the promise of any assistance in finding jobs.

The women on welfare want to work. Look at any study that has been issued. These studies tell us that over 60 percent of the young mothers on welfare are out there looking for jobs and half of them do find jobs and cut off welfare. These people who say that the women stay there 13 years on welfare are simply not telling the truth.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina [Mrs. MYRICK], the former mayor of Charlotte.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, the President's decision to sign this welfare reform bill is really great news for Washington and for America in general. It is an experiment. We may have to look at it again in the future, but it is a sin not to help someone who is in need. This welfare bill will really reform and empower the States to be creative in solving their own problems and it will help end the cycle of dependency and poverty, which really truly helps millions of children with a decent fulfilling future.

As a former mayor, I know firsthand these ideas work because we had pilot programs in our area where we were moving people out of public housing and into home ownership and off of welfare with child care help and really giving them their dignity back again.

It is a sin not to help someone who genuinely, truly needs that help through no fault of their own, but it is also a sin to help people who do not need help. So this bill is going to encourage that personal responsibility that we are all so proud of and give people their dignity back.

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from North Dakota [Mr. POMEROY].

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this legislation. I believe this
The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCNINIS). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California [Mr. FARR] is recognized for 1 minute.

(Mr. FARR of California asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FARR. California. Mr. Speaker, everybody in this Congress wants welfare reform. That is not the debate. But not everybody in the Congress wants to shift the cost from Federal Government to local government.

We usually ask ourselves as lawmakers to look before we leap. I do not think we have done that here on the welfare reform bill. We have asked to be quoted by Governors, but Governors do not administer welfare, communities do. Counties and cities do. Has anyone asked the taxpayers and county supervisors? Well, I did.

In California we are going to shift 230,000 people who are legal residents of the United States who are disabled. They are off. They live in our community. Where are they going to go? What will this bill do to help them?

This bill goes on. It hurts the people in our neighborhoods, people who go to school with our children. What can we do about this without giving the Senator, that is what hurts the disabled, that hurts the elderly? In the Congress of the richest Nation in the world, what can we do is vote “no” on this bill and say we can do a better job.

We want welfare reform, but a welfare reform bill that just plows the problem on the community is not reform at all. I ask for a “no” vote.

Mr. Speaker, I insert the following material for the RECORD:

COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ, HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY, Santa Cruz, CA, July 17, 1996.

Re recommendation to oppose H.R. 3507 and S. 1795 denying eligibility for federal programs to legal immigrants.

Hon. SAM FARR, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE FARR: We are writing to convey major concerns raised by the most recent proposed welfare legislation currently being considered by Congress.

SERVICES FOR AGED AND DISABLED LEGAL IMMIGRANTS

Denying Federal benefits to legal immigrants disproportionately affects California communities. Over 230,000 non-citizen legal immigrants currently receive SSI in California, excluding refugees. This aid is provided to the aged, blind and disabled, who could not support themselves by going to work if their SSI benefits ended. Under H.R. 3507, SSI and Food Stamps would be denied to non-citizens already living in California as well as to new legal entrants, unlike the immigration reform legislation currently under consideration in Congress, which permits continued benefits for existing legal residents.

The proposed bar on SSI and Food Stamps for legal immigrants, and the denial of other Federal means-tested programs to new legal entrants for their first five years in the country would have a devastating effect on California’s counties, which are obligated to be the providers of last resort. It is estimated that these proposed changes would result in costs of $9 billion to California’s counties over a seven-year period. At a minimum, the very elderly, those too disabled to become citizens and those who become disabled after they arrive in this country cannot be exempted from benefits on SSI—if for no other reason than to lessen costs to the counties the indefensible cost of shifting care from the Federal government to local taxpayers for a needy population admitted under U.S. immigration laws.

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

While we agree that welfare dependence should not be encouraged as a way of life, it is essential in setting time limits on aid that adequate protections be provided for children once parents hit these time limits. Some provision must be made for other mechanisms by which the essential survival needs of children such as food can be met. The Administration has suggested this sort of approach as a means of ensuring adequate protection for children whose parents hit time limits on aid.

California’s child poverty rate was 27 percent for 1992 through 1994, substantially above the national rate of 21 percent. H.R. 4, which was vetoed by the President, would have caused an additional 1.5 million children to become poor. While the proposals currently under consideration have not been produced for H.R. 3507, it is likely that it also would result in a significant additional number of children falling below the poverty level.

ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR CHILD CARE

Funds provided for child care are essential to meet the needs of parents entering the
Thank you for your consideration of these concerns. If your staff have any questions about these issues, they can contact Tim Gage at (916) 324-0341.

Sincerely,

Bill Lockyer,

President Pro Tempore, California Senate

RICHARD KATZ,

President Pro Tempor, California Senate

Medicaid: House bars Medicaid to most legal immigrants. Senate imposes lesser restrictions on immigrant access to Medicaid. The Senate Medicaid provisions affect about half as many people as after six years. Refugees/Awbanese: Most refugees and asylum seekers have been more here than five years and would be subject to the bar.

Identical provisions.

The definition of “means-tested” programs was deleted from the Senate bill because of the “Byrd rule.”

Prohibition: Not qualified bar from Social Security (affects new applicants only), unemployment, all federal needs-based programs, and any governmental grant, contract, loan, or professional of commercial license (nonimmigrants may receive license or contract related to visa.)
Verification and reporting. Agencies such as battered women's shelters, hospitals, and law enforcement agencies may keep immigration information confidential if they feel such confidentiality is advisable given their mission. For example, a law enforcement agency may assure a fleeing witness that he or she will not be deported as a result of coming forward to report a crime.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS].

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time and for his hard work on this very historic and very important legislation.

This legislation curtails food stamp fraud, it limits the access of resident aliens to welfare programs, which just might persuade some visitors to our country who did not come here to work to return home, but, more importantly, it is another step in the process of de-volving or sending social services back to the States and getting control back in the hands of local managers who are closer to the problems of the poor.

It addresses a fundamental fairness issue in American society, and that is the resentment of working individuals toward able-bodied individuals who refuse to get off the dole. Most importantly, in my mind, it addresses the problem of welfare dependency and welfare pathology in this country, which has led to soaring rates of family disintegration, illegitimacy in American society, and the other consequences, like youth crime.

This is indeed an historic day in this body and a very, very important piece of legislation, in my view the most important legislation we will enact in the 104th Congress.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

Mr. Speaker, let me say first of all that there are some good things in this legislation that could have and should have become law without being tied to the rest of this fundamentally flawed package. The President has made a mistake in endorsing this legislation and the Congress will make a mistake in passing it.

Essentially, Mr. Speaker, this legislation reduces assets that we need to help those who are the most vulnerable in our society. Seventy percent of all the people on welfare are infants and children. The rest are so disabled one way or another, and they cannot make a go of it. This bill reduces their assets, reduces the assets of the people we are trying to help to improve and better their situation.

For some reason that we do not thoroughly understand, the bottom three-fifths of all the people in the United States have not made any progress in the last 20 years, economically speaking. The bottom one-fifth have lost 18 percent of their resources that are available to them. This bill further exacerbates that problem and will hurt infants and children. It should be vetoed.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 1/2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS], a member of the Committee on the Budget.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, politicians are elected by adults to represent the children. We need to save our children fromcrippling national debt, Government debt. We need to make sure that our trust funds, like Medicare, are there for our children. And most importantly, we need to enable, we need to help our children become independent citizens of this great and magnificent country. This bill helps to transform our caretaking, social and corporate welfare state into a caring opportunity society.

I extend tremendous admiration to the gentleman from Florida, [Mr. SHAW] for not giving into those who wanted to weaken the bill so that it would end up not doing anything. We have a caring bill that does this. In the final analysis, it is not what you do for your children but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings.

It ends this caretaking society and moves toward a caring society where we teach our children and the adults who raise our children how to grow the seeds, how to have the food.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York [Mr. RANGEL].

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, what time is it? It is time for us to get on with our conventions. We better get on with the Democratic Convention and Republican Convention. What do we want to say that we are for? Reform. What is a nagging sore in everyone's problem? Welfare. People who do not work.

What is the bill all about? Well, the bill is supposed to be to protect children. I heard the previous speaker say that. He said that this child will be cut off of welfare if the mother does not...
get a job in 2, 3, 4 or 5 years. He did not say it, but I know he read the bill.

The winners in this are the Governors. There is nothing to tell the Governors what to do, and they will be the losers in the long run, but not as bad as they can be. They can devise laws that separate them from the children they want with immigrants and with little kids because for 60 years we have said there is a safety net for children. But not before this election.

Who won? Bob Dole? Oh, yes, he said it and this time he put the President's throat. Three strikes and the President would have been out so he wins because what the heck, he forced the issue.

And who is another winner? My President, He is a winner. He has removed this one again. Everything you come up with, my President says, oh, no you do not. And so here again he is a winner.

So when we look at it, this is a big political victory for the Democrats. It is a victory for all of our friends including myself and all of my friends. And we are here because we have lost the war on poverty. To fight in this century. And we have spent on all the wars that we have fought in this century. Who has worked?

Eight months ago we had Federal welfare legislation on this floor that would have cut severely disabled children by 25 percent. Today we do not have that flawed two-tiered system. Eight months ago we had a welfare conference report on the floor that would have blocked foster care or would have made foster care a block grant, and also food stamps. Today's legislation retains the Federal guarantee of food stamps for those who are currently entitled to these services.

Eight months ago we had Federal welfare legislation on this floor that would have cut severely disabled children by 25 percent. Today we do not have that flawed two-tiered system. Eight months ago we had Federal welfare legislation that would have denied millions of Americans Medicaid because they lost welfare eligibility. Today's legislation, the legislation before us, guarantees continual health coverage for those who are currently entitled to these services.

Eight months ago we had voted on legislation that would have underfunded child care. This bill has $4.5 billion in it for child care.

Mr. Speaker, I am not insisting the legislation is perfect. Most legislation is not perfect. But I predict we will be back on this very floor finding more answers and better answers than we have today. If that is there, I will be involved in these changes. But today we have to decide if this legislation as a whole represents an improvement over the status quo. My answer is: Yes, it does.

While some of the changes here being suggested pose risks, so does the current system. The system is clearly broken, offering more dependence than opportunity. We can vote today to at least begin to transform the welfare system. Today we can begin welfare reform, those of us who have worked hard over the months to make the bill, with those who had the bill. We now have the bill. We should vote for the bill and get on with welfare reform.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARCHER], the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, the only way we can change people's behavior is by changing the system. Franklin Roosevelt warned that giving permanent aid to anyone destroys them. By creating a culture of poverty and a culture of violence, we have destroyed the very people we are claiming to help. Can any serious person argue that the federalization of poverty by Washington has worked?

Government, since 1965, has spent over $5 trillion on welfare, more than we have spent on all the wars that we have fought in this century. And we have lost the war on poverty. With this bill, we can begin to win the war.

We need to come to the realization that dollars alone will not solve the problem. We need to give unemployed people hope and equip them for work so they will be better able to help themselves. As a result, the gentleman from Oklahoma, J. C. WATTS, says, they are eagles waiting to soar.

Today we will ask those now receiving welfare to make a deal with the taxpayer. We will provide you with temporary help to get you through the hard times and we will help you feed your family and get the training you need, and in exchange, we ask that you commit yourself to find a job and move back into the economy. They can do it. They can do it.

I am pleased to see that the President has finally agreed to join us in our fight to overhaul the broken-down welfare system. It has been a long, arduous road since 1965 when Ronald Reagan first made the effort to do something about work fare and finally we are here.

Mr. President, the poor have suffered long enough and now we have the opportunity to change it all and help the hard-working taxpayers as well.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I predict we will be back on this measure. And I am not always right.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to hear that President Clinton has endorsed the welfare bill that will pass the House today. Clearly, the time has come to end welfare as we know it. The welfare system as we know it has been a disaster. The only thing great about the Great Society was the great harm it has caused our children.

Mr. Speaker, we make commonsense changes long requested by the American people.

Common sense dictates that able-bodied people work.

Common sense dictates that only Americans should receive welfare benefits in this country.

Common sense dictates that incentives to keep families together.

Common sense dictates that welfare should not be a way of life.

Now liberal Democrats will vainly challenge these simple truths, and even the President could not help himself and has challenged some of these truths, but time and experience has proven them wrong. Welfare has not worked for the people it was supposed to help.

Furthermore, we know that in fact, now is the time to change this system. Some well-meaning people will once again make the claim that welfare reform is mean-spirited. Well, I disagree. We reform welfare now out of spite because of some of the Geography. We change this system not because we want to hurt people, but because we want to help people help themselves. And we change this system not to throw children into the streets, but to give children a greater chance to realize the American dream and still maintain a safety net for those truly in need.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of this Congress for the great work on this historic legislation, and I am pleased that President Clinton has agreed to finally live up to his campaign promise.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New York [Mr. NADLER].

Mr. NADLER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, sadly, it seems clear that this House today will abdicate its moral duty and knowingly vote to allow children to go hungry in America. Sadly, our President, a member of the Democratic Party, the party of Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, will sign this bill.

Does this bill allocate sufficient funds to provide employment for people who want to work? No.

Does this bill provide adequate child care so parents can leave their children in a safe environment and earn a living? No.

Does this bill ensure that people leaving welfare can take their kids to a doctor when they get sick? No.

Does this bill do anything to raise wages so people who work hard to play by the rules will not have to see their children grow up in poverty? No.

Does this bill reduce the value of food stamps for children of the poorest working people to push these children into poverty and hunger? No.
Mr. Speaker, I know that scapegoating poor children is politically popular this year, but it is not right. We must stand up for our country's children. I urge my colleagues to reject this immoral legislation.  

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN].  

Mr. LEVIN of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, the bill we are considering today is a bad bill. I will vote against it and I urge all people of conscience to vote against it. A bad bill because it penalizes children for the actions of their parents. This bill, Mr. Speaker, will put 1 million more children into poverty. How, how can any person of faith, of conscience vote for a bill that puts a million more kids into poverty. Where is the compassion, where is the sense of decency, where is the heart of this Congress. This bill is mean, it is base, it is downright low down. We are a great nation. We put a man on the Moon, we have learned to fly through the air like a bird and swim like a fish in the sea. We are the world's only superpower. We did not do this by running away—by giving up. As a nation, as a people—as a government—we met our challenges—we won.  

This bill gives up—it throws in the towel. We cannot run away from our challenges—our responsibilities—and leave them to the States. That is not the character of a great nation. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, What does it profit a great nation to conquer the world, only to lose its soul? Mr. Speaker, this bill is an abdication of our responsibility and an abandonment of our morality. It is wrong, just plain wrong.  

It was Hubert Humphrey, who said: We can judge a society by how it treats its children. The children, for the poor, for the disabled, for the children of the parent who needs to break out of a cycle of dependency, for her/his good, for the child's and for the taxpayer.  

The challenge has been to find a new balance, that combines State flexibility with national standards. The first two bills vetoed by the President failed to address effectively work and dealt insensitively with children. If the AFDC entitlement was going to be replaced by a block grant—which was already beginning to happen through Federal waivers—after the vetoes we successfully pressured the Republican majority to make substantial improvements in day care, health care, benefits for severely disabled children and to retain the basic structure of foster care, food stamps and the school lunch program.  

In a word, this is a different bill than those vetoed by the President. The bill before us is at its very weakest in two areas essentially unrelated to AFDC—food stamps and legal immigrants. Reform was needed in these areas, but surely not punishment nor a mere search for dollars, as was true of the majority's approach.  

The question is whether the defects in those areas should sink changes in this bill.  

I hope in the next session there will be a Congress willing to address these legitimate concerns with President Clinton. Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the distinguished gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. HAYES], a valued member of the Committee on Ways and Means.  

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, folks at home simply wonder if they can tell the difference between a disabled veteran who has become disabled because of a false war on poverty, converting food stamps into drugs, why cannot the Government. They want to know, if they can tell the difference between a young woman whose husband has walked out and a teen who becomes pregnant because of a system that rewards it, why cannot the Government? Today this body answers that it can tell the difference. The Senate can tell the difference. And I am very pleased to understand that the President is going to sign the bill that allows people at home to at least know we have that judgment to make that difference. Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. HOYER].  

Mr. HOYER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.  

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the bill. America's welfare system is at odds with the American values of work, opportunity, family. Instead of rewarding and encouraging work, it does little to help people find jobs, and penalizes those who go to work. Instead of strengthening families and instilling personal responsibility, the system penalizes two-parent families, and lets too many absent parents off the hook.  

Instead of promoting decency, the culture of welfare offices seems to create an expectation of dependence rather than independence. And the very ones who hate being on welfare are desperately trying to escape it. In society we cannot afford a social welfare system without obligations. In order for welfare reform to be successful, individuals must accept the responsibility of working and providing for their families. In the instances where benefits are provided, they must be tied to obligations. We must invest our resources on those who value work and responsibility. Moreover, we must support strict requirements which move people from dependence to independence. Granting rights without demanding responsibility is unacceptable. The current system undermines personal responsibility, destroys self-respect and initiative, and fails to move able-bodied people from welfare to work. Therefore, a complete overhaul of the welfare system is long overdue. We must create a different kind of social safety net which will uphold the values our current system destroys. It must require work, and it must demand responsibility.  

Today, the House will take a historic step as it moves toward approving a welfare reform conference report which takes significant steps to end welfare as we know it. The bill is not perfect. But, at the insistence of the President and congressional Democrats, significant improvements to require work and protect children have been made. It is because of these important changes that I will vote in favor of this bill. This bill requires all recipients to work within 2 years of receiving benefits. The bill requires teen parents to live at home or in a supervised setting, and teaches responsibility by requiring school or training attendance as a condition of receiving assistance. When the House Ways and Means Committee marked up its first welfare bill 1 1/2 years ago, Democrats proposed an amendment to exempt mothers of young children from work requirements if they had no safe place for their children to stay during the day. The amendment was defeated by a unanimous Republican vote. I am pleased that the conference report prohibits States from penalizing mothers of children under 6 if they cannot work because they cannot find child care.  

A year and a half ago, Ways and Means Committee Republican and Democratic amendments to strengthen child support enforcement provisions, because committee Republicans felt those sanctions were “too hard” on deadbeat dads. I am pleased that this conference report includes every provision in the President's child support enforcement proposal, the toughest crackdown on deadbeat parents in history.  

A year and a half ago, the Republican welfare bill included a child nutrition block grant that would have caused hundreds of children in Maryland to lose school lunches—for some of those children, the only meal they would receive in a day. I am pleased that the conference report maintains the guarantee of school meals for our neediest kids.
As recently as last week, the House Republican bill eliminated the guarantee of food stamps for poor children and assistance for children who had been neglected or abused. I am pleased that this bill prohibits the block grants which dismantle food stamp and child protection assistance.

Like many Americans, I continue to have concerns about some of the provisions in this bill. We must be certain that both the Federal and State governments live up to their responsibilities to protect children who may lose assistance through no fault of their own. We must make sure that legal immigrants, who have paid taxes and in some cases defended the United States in our armed services, are not abandoned in their hour of need. And it is not enough to move people off of welfare—we must move them into jobs that make them self-sufficient and contributing members of society.

This bill supports the American values of work and personal responsibility. It has moved significantly in the direction of the welfare reform proposals made by Congressman Deal and Congressmen Tancredo and Castle, both of which I supported. I applaud this important step to end welfare as we know it, and intend to vote in favor of this bill.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Rhode Island [Mr. KENNEDY].

Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island. Mr. Speaker, just hearing my colleague, the gentleman for yielding the time, I can tell you, each State is under its poverty, you leave it to the whim of the States.

And yet our Republican friends who are offering this welfare reform, as they call it, are willing to embrace States rights; what their block grant plan means is that again justice will depend on geography. In my State of Rhode Island, over 40,000 kids in poverty are going to be put at a disadvantage under the block grant system because when you take away the money that is entitled to kids based upon their poverty, you leave it to the whim of the States.

I can tell you, each State is under pressure to lower the bar so that you can squeeze people even more. This is wrong.

When Mr. SHAW and Mr. ARCHER say that we don’t want to be too hard on the States, the problem is that they are asking the Republicans, what are they going to substitute when a poor child needs food, what are they going to substitute for the money that they are supposed to be providing through these programs?

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California [Ms. PELOSI].

Ms. PELOSI of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding the time.

I rise to mention the welfare bill. If this bill passed today, it will be a victory for the political spin artists and a defeat for the infants and children of America.

We all agree that the welfare system must be reformed. But we must make sure that that reform reduces poverty, not bashes poor people. The cuts in this bill will diminish the quality of life of children in poor families in America and will have a devastating impact on the economy.

Food and nutrition cuts will result in increased hunger. Local government will be forced to pay for the Federal Government’s abdication of responsibility. How can a country as great as America ignore the needs of America’s infants and children who are born into poverty?

The Bible tells us that to minister to the needs of God’s children is an act of worship; to ignore those needs is to dishonor the God who made them.

Mr. Speaker, let us not go down that path today.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York [Mr. Towns].

Mr. TOWNS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, vote no on this pain and shame that we are inflicting on young people, a garbage bill. This agreement along with the other vetoed welfare bills amount to nothing short of a roll-call of pain and shame that will be dumped on those Americans who are clearly in need of a social service safety net.

And to add to that pain, legal immigrants will bear 40 percent of the cuts in welfare even though they make up only 5 percent of the population receiving welfare benefits.

No one is satisfied with the way welfare policy is constructed or practiced. The Federal Government doesn’t like it; the local administrators don’t like it; the social workers don’t like it; the majority of the taxpayers don’t like it; the recipients don’t like it. There is no doubt that the welfare system in this country needs to be cleaned. Clearly reform is necessary. But the scope of the proposed reforms will victimize those Americans most in need of assistance.

I urge a “no” vote on this conference agreement.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 45 seconds to the gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. Brown].

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, this was a bad House bill, a bad Senate bill and the conference report did not fix it. It is still bad.

You can judge a great society by how it treats its children, its senior citizens. This bill guts our future. I urge my colleagues to vote against it.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose this conference report. The House welfare reform bill was a bad bill, the Senate bill was a bad bill and the conference report does not fix it. This legislation is so bad that it can’t be fixed.

This bill will have a horrible impact on the children in my State. In Florida, at least 235,000 children would be denied benefits under this legislation. In Florida alone, 48,000 health cards would be pushed away. Children will be hungrier if this bill becomes law.

In Florida, 111,926 children would be denied aid in the year 2005 because of the 5 year time limit. In Florida, 42,714 babies would be denied cash aid in the year 2000 because they were born to families already on welfare.

In the year 2000, 80,667 children in Florida would be denied benefits if the State froze its spending on cash assistance at the 1994 levels.

And in addition to the travesty this bill does to our children, this bill will pull the rug out from under our seniors who are legal immigrants.

For a State like Florida whose population has such a large number of legal immigrants, the impact will be extremely high.

And yet another troubling aspect of this bill we need to look at. No victim of domestic violence, no matter how abused nor how desperate, could know that if she left her abusive spouse, that she would be able to rely upon cash assistance for herself or for her children—even for a short period of time until she was able to secure employment.

I have always believed that the sign of a great society is how well it treats its most vulnerable—children and seniors. Our children are America’s future. This bill prevents the future generation from contributing to American society and instead dooms today’s poor children to deeper poverty and no chance to take their place as productive members of our society.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I come over here to do something I have never done before; that is, to trespass on the Democrat side. I hope that they will give me their understanding in my doing so, because I do not do this out of arrogance. I do it out of coming together.

We have heard a lot of name calling, a lot of rhetoric, a lot of sound bites that we have heard all through this debate. We have come down a long road together. It was inevitable that the present welfare system was going to be put behind us.

Today we need to bring to closure an era of a failed welfare system. I say this, and I say this to the Democrat side because I know that the Democrats agree with the Republicans. This is not a Republican bill that we are showing down your throats. We are going to get a lot of Democratic support today. I think the larger the support, the more chance there is for this to really work and work well.

The degree of the success that we are going to have is going to be a victory for the American people, for the poor. It is not going to be a victory for one political party. It is time now for us to put our hands out to one another and to come together to solve the problems of the poor.

Without vision, the people will perish. Unfortunately, we have not had vision in our welfare system now for many, many years. It has been allowed to sit stagnant. We have piled layer upon layer of humanity on top of each other. We have paid people not to get jobs. We have paid people to have children out of marriage. We have paid people not to work.

This is self-destructive behavior. We know that. We all agree with that.
I know we have heard many, many speakers: My friend, the gentleman from Georgia, John Lewis, thinking that we are going the wrong way; my friend, the gentleman from New York, Charlie Rangel, saying that we are going the wrong way.

I also see some of my colleagues who have fought for different changes within the welfare bill within the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Committee on Ways and Means, now coming to closure, where they do not believe it is a perfect bill. And I can stand here and say it is not a perfect bill, but it is as good as this Congress can do. It is as good as we can come together.

We have included the Governors in balancing out their interests and in seeing what they have been successful with and how they feel that they can be successful. We have talked to many of the Members on the Democrats’ side, and to my Republican colleagues I say, we are not through. We have another long road ahead of us. We need to get to a technical corrections bill as we see problems arise within this bill that we are going to be passing today.

It was unexpected to hear that the President was going to endorse this bill and announce his signature of it. But let us now be patient with each other. Let us work with each other and let us bring this awful era of a failed welfare system to closure.

Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. Cardin].

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. McInnis) The gentleman from Maryland [Mr. Cardin] is recognized for 2½ minutes.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida [Mr. Gibbons] for yielding me the time.

Let me say to my friend, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. Shaw], first, congratulations on a job very well done and every taxpayer on the aisle a little bit more frequently. I think that if we would have started working together in a bipartisan spirit, we could have had a better bill today, and we could have gotten here a little bit sooner. But I thank the gentleman very much for the way in which he has provided leadership on this issue. I know it has been heartfelt, and I know he has worked very, very hard.

Mr. Speaker, I support the conference report because I think it is important that we return welfare to what it was originally intended to be, and that is a transitional temporary program to help those people that are in need. The current system does not do that. We cannot defend the current system.

But let me make it clear to my colleagues, the bill before us is a far better bill than the bill that was originally brought forward by the Republicans 2 years ago, the bill that was vetoed twice by the President. We have a better bill here today.

It is a bill that provides for major improvement in child support enforcement, something all of us agreed to; provides protective services for our children, which was not in the original bill; provides health insurance to people coming off welfare; something that is very important; day care services, another important ingredient that people are going to get off welfare to work. Food stamps are in much better condition than the bill that was vetoed. We fought for the federal welfare block grant, the contingency fund in case of a downturn of our economy, and we have maintenance of effort requirements on our States so we can assure that there are certain minimum standards that are met in protecting people in our society.

The bottom line is that this bill is better than the current system. It could have been better, and I regret that. I am not sure there is enough resources in this bill to make sure that people get adequate education and job training in order to find employment, and I look forward to working with the gentleman from Florida [Mr. Shaw] to make sure that this becomes a reality.

But I do urge colleagues to support the conference report because bottom line: It is far better than the current system.

Yes, we are going to take a risk to get people off of welfare to work, but the current system is not fair either to the welfare recipient or the taxpayer.

This conference report is far better, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the distinguished gentleman from Ohio [Mr. Kasich], chairman of the Committee on the Budget.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. McInnis) The gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 5½ minutes.

Mr. KASICH. Mr. Speaker, I would like to initially congratulate the gentleman from Florida [Mr. Shaw] for his relentlessness in being able to pursue a welfare reform that deserves the lion’s share of the credit, along with the gentleman from Texas [Mr. Archer], who has done an outstanding job, and although I do not see him on the floor, our very able staff director, Ron Haskins, who has probably lived with this bill for about a decade, feeling passionately about the need to reform welfare.

As my colleagues know, it was pretty amazing today watching our President of the United States come on television and say that he was going, in fact, to sign this welfare bill. The reason why it is so amazing today is that because the American people, during all of my adult lifetime, have said that they want a welfare system that is fair, that is compassionate, that is fair, that is compassionate to the people who cannot help themselves, but they want a system that is going to ask the able-bodied to get out and begin to work themselves. This has been delayed and put off, with a million excuses as to why we could not get it done.

I just want to suggest to my friends who are in opposition, and I respect their opposition; many of them just did not talk; many of them were not able to talk, as they were beaten in the civil right protests in this country. I respect their opposition. But the simple fact of the matter is that this program was losing public support, and the cynicism connected to this program from the folks who get up and go to work every day for a living, and I do not mean the most fortunate, I mean those mothers and fathers who have had to struggle for an entire lifetime to make ends meet, they have never asked for food stamps, the have never asked for welfare, they have never asked for housing, and they are struggling. They are counting their nickels. They do not take the bus transfer because it costs a little extra money, and they walk instead so they can save some more money to educate their children. These people were becoming cynical, they were being poisoned in regard to this system, and this welfare program.

Mr. Speaker, we all know here, as we have watched the Congress, the history of Congress over the decades, that when the American people speak, we must deliver to them what they want. They said they wanted the Vietnam war over. It took a decade, but they got it, and public cynicism and lack of support was rising against this program. It was necessary to give the people a program they could support.

But I also want to say that the American people have never, if I could be so bold as to represent a point of view, have never said that those who cannot help themselves should not be helped. That is Judeo-Christianity, something that we all know has to be rekindled. Our souls must once again become attached to one another, and the people of this country and Judeo-Christianity said it is a sin not to help somebody who needs help, but it is equally a sin to help somebody who needs to learn how to help themselves.

But I say to my friends who oppose this bill:

This is about the best of us. This is about having hopes and dreams. After 40 or 50 years of not trusting one another in our neighborhoods and having to vacate our power and our authority to the central government, to the Washington bureaucrats, this is now about reclaiming our power, it is about reasserting our American strength, it is about reclaiming our authority, it is about rebuilding our community, it is about rebuilding our families, it is about cementing our neighborhoods, and it is about believing that all of us can march to that State capitol, that all of us can go into the schools and organizations and we can demand excellence, we can demand compassion, and that we can do it better.

We marched 30, 40 years ago because we thought people were not being treated fairly, and we marched today for the very same reason. What I would say, and maybe let me take it back and say many of my friends marched. I was
too young, but I watched, and I respect it. What I would suggest at the end of the day, however, is that we all are going to have to stand up for those who get neglected in reform, but frankly this system is going to provide far more benefits for far more hope, restore the confidence the American people deserve that we have a system that will help those that cannot help themselves and at the same time demand something from able-bodied people who can. It will benefit them, children, it will help the children that they don’t go to America a winner in this. The President of the United States has recognized this. He has joined with this Congress, and I think we have a bipartisan effort here to move America down the road towards reclaiming our neighborhoods and helping America.

And I would say to my friends, we will be bold enough and humble enough when we see that mistakes are being made, to be able to come back and fix them; but let’s not let these obstacles stand in the way of rebuilding this program based on fundamental American values. Support the conference report.

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this welfare reform conference report. This bill is not perfect, but it does move us down the road toward reforming the welfare system to help families in need.

I have long advocated and agree with provisions requiring work and encouraging self-sufficiency and personal responsibility. This was contained in previous so-called welfare reform.

Congress’s welfare reform legislation also has tough work requirements. Families must work within 2 years or lose their benefits. Work is the beginning of dignity and personal responsibility. Single mothers who desire to work can now do so. They need to work within 2 years or lose their benefits. They can want to teach their kids how to take responsibility for their lives.

This legislation reverses welfare as we know it today. The average length of stay for families on welfare in 13 years. The cycle of dependency must stop.

Welfare reform legislation also tough work requirements. Families must work within 2 years or lose their benefits. Work is the beginning of dignity and personal responsibility. Single mothers who desire to work can now do so. They need to work within 2 years or lose their benefits. They can want to teach their kids how to take responsibility for their lives.

Two parent families are encouraged through this plan. It takes two people to make a baby. Strong paternal requirements and tough child support measures ensure that deadbeat parents will take responsibility for their actions.

This welfare reform package is estimated to save the American taxpayers $56.2 billion over the next 6 years. It is a balanced approach that gives the States more autonomy and flexibility in crafting solutions. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act promotes work while also guaranteeing families adequate child care, medical care, and food assistance. It is compassionate while promoting the dignity of Americans through an honest day’s work. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak out against a great injustice, an injustice that is being committed against our Nation’s children, defenseless, nonvoting, children. I am referring of course to the conference agreement on H.R. 3734, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act.

We speak so often in this House about family values and protecting children. At the same time however, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, have presented a welfare reform bill that will effectively eliminate the Federal guarantee of assistance for poor children in this country for the first time in 65 years and will push millions more children into poverty.

A recent study by the Urban Institute estimated that the welfare legislation passed by the House would increase the number of children in poverty by 1.1 million, or 12 percent. The analysis estimated that families on welfare would lose, on average, about $1,000 a year once the bill is fully implemented. More than a fifth of American families with children would be affected by the legislation. Future prohibitions on Medicaid for the uninsured persons living in family and children. The Republican bill continues to be weak on work and hard on families. Without adequate funding for education, training, child care and employment, most of our Nation’s poor will be unable to avoid or escape the welfare trap. Even before the adoption of amendments by the House, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the Republican proposal is some $9 billion short of what would be needed in fiscal years 1999 through 2002 to provide adequate funding for the States to carry out the work program.

Furthermore, the increase in the minimum work hours requirement, without a commensurate increase in child care funding, will make it almost impossible for States to provide child care for families. We know that the President does not believe this program can ever be achieved and welfare dependency will never be broken, unless we are cheaper, education, training, child care, and jobs that pay a living wage.

I am particularly concerned that, through the House bill, this conference report prohibits using cash welfare block grant funds to provide vouchers for children. We know that when the bill is fully implemented. More than a fifth of American families with children would be affected by the legislation. Future prohibitions on Medicaid for the uninsured persons living in family and children. The Republican bill continues to be weak on work and hard on families. Without adequate funding for education, training, child care and employment, most of our Nation’s poor will be unable to avoid or escape the welfare trap. Even before the adoption of amendments by the House, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the Republican proposal is some $9 billion short of what would be needed in fiscal years 1999 through 2002 to provide adequate funding for the States to carry out the work program.

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and is given the resources to be successful. The GOP bill is punitive and wrongheaded. It will not put people to work, it will put them on the street. Any restructuring of the welfare system must move people away from depend- ence toward self-sufficiency. Facilitating the transition from welfare requires job training, guaranteed child care, and health insurance at an affordable price.

We cannot expect to reduce our welfare rolls if we do not provide the women of this Nation the opportunity to better themselves and their children through job training and educa- tion, if we do not provide them with good quality child care and, most importantly, if we do not provide them with a job.

Together, welfare programs make up the safety net that poor children and their families rely on in times of need. We must not allow the safety net to be shredded. We must keep our promises to the children of this Nation. We must ensure that in times of need they receive the health care, food, and general services they need. By urging our colleagues to oppose this dangerous legislation and to live up to our moral responsibility to help the poor help themselves.

Mr. BLIELEY. Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I take this opportunity to address the wel- fare reform initiative before us today. This measure will do exactly what its name promises: promote personal responsibility and work opportunity for disadvantaged Ameri- cans. More important, it will replace the de- pair of welfare dependency with the pride of independence.

This measure is critical to welfare reform ini- tiatives taking place in the States. In my State, the Virginia Independence Program has al- ready helped two-thirds of all eligible welfare recipients find meaningful jobs and restore hope to their lives.

This legislation will enable Virginia to con- tinue its highly successful statewide reform program. And it will allow other States to cre- ate similar initiatives—without having to waste time and money seeking a waiver from the Federal Government.

I am also proud of the role that the Com- merce Committee has played in crafting this landmark initiative. Although the Medicaid re- form plan designed by the Nation’s Republican and Democrat Governors is not a part of this legislation, the conference report does include important Medicaid provisions.

In particular, the conference report guaran- tees continued coverage for all those who are eligible under the current AFDC Program. It also ensures that eligible children will not lose the health coverage they need. And it requires adult recipients to comply with work require- ments in order to remain eligible for Medicaid benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close by con- gratulating all those who helped to shape this historic measure. It deserves our full support, and it should be signed by the President.

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, today this body will take a large step in making sweeping re- form in welfare reform, welfare reform, welfare reform, we move toward a system that emphasizes work and independ- ence—a new system that represents real change and expanded opportunity. Although this bill is not perfect, it is our best chance in years to enact welfare reform that represents an opportunity to improve the current system.

Sadley, our current system hurts the very people it is designed to protect by perpetuat- ing a cycle of dependency. For those stuck on welfare, the system is not working. It is clear that we cannot and should not continue with the status quo. The status quo has fostered an entire culture of poverty. Our current sys- tem does little to help poor individuals move from welfare to work.

It is clear the best antipoverty program is a job. To that end, this bill encourages work. It requires welfare recipients to work after 2 years and imposes a 5-year lifetime limit on welfare benefits. The bill turns Aid to Families with Dependent Children programs into a block grant program, allowing States to create their own unique welfare programs to best serve their residents. The bill maintains health care benefits for those currently receiving Medicaid because of their AFDC eligibility and provides $14 billion for child care so parents can go to work without worrying about the health and safety of their children. In addition, this bill preserves the earned income tax credit which has been successful in helping working fami- lies.

Mr. Speaker, I voted against the Republican welfare reform bill when it was before this House. That bill represented a drastic depar- ture from the actual intent of welfare—to help the most vulnerable in our society in their time of need. Thinking through the safety net of Medicaid and food stamps for many children. It was mean in spirit and should not have passed. The conference agreement that is before us today, however, is much more reasonable. Children will have the guarantee of health care through Medicaid even as their parents transition to work. Fur- ther, unlike the House bill, States will not be able to opt out of the Federal Food Stamp Program. The conference agreement is a far better bill than the measure passed by the House. It is a step toward the shared goal of welfare reform.

I am pleased the President has indicated he will sign this bill into law. I applaud the Presi- dent—who has worked on this issue for years, even before it was politically fashionable—for continuing to fight for a bill that is not passed before signing it into law. While the President and I agree that this bill is by no means per- fect, it is a good starting point. We can begin the process of moving toward a system that encourages and rewards work for all able-bod- ed citizens.

Mr. TORRES. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposi- tion to this antifamily, antichildren bill. There are so many parts of this bill that should con- cern us. I could stand here all day and de- scribe, in detail, how this bill falls short of our shared goal of welfare reform.

For example, consider the effects on our Nation’s most unfortunate children. I say un- fortunate because these children are being sacrificed by election year politics simply be- cause they cannot vote. Their already difficult lives will be made impossible due to food stamp reductions, loss of SSI as- sistance, and no guarantee of Federal assist- ance when time runs out for them and their families. The effect will be to drive up an addi- tional 1.1 million children into poverty.

Like I said, I could go on and on. But, I won’t waste your time discussing what we all know: that block grants aren’t responsive to a changing economy and inadequate child-care provisions make welfare-to-work a very difficult journey.

I will tell you what this so-called reform will mean to California, and how my State is being asked to absorb 40 percent of the proposed cuts. Why? Because California is home to the largest immigrant population in our country and this bill denies legal immigrants Federal assistance. It does not take much to do the math and understand the consequences of de- nying food stamps, supplemental security in- come, Medicaid for many of our State’s pop- ulation. There are no exceptions for children or the elderly, regardless of the situation.

The needs of these taxing, legal resi- dents will not vanish because the Federal Government looks the other way. The children will still be hungry, the sick will still be sick, and the disabled will still have special needs. Someone will have to provide these services, and it will be our cities and counties who are forced to pick up the tab. And for California, the bill will be approximately $9 billion over 7 years.

My district of Los Angeles County is home to some 3 million foreign-born residents. County officials estimate that denying SSI to legal immigrants could cost the county as much as $236 million per year in general relief assistance. More importantly, this translates into no Federal assistance for the elderly or disabled children.

These costs would continue to rise with the loss of Medicaid coverage for legal immi- grants. More than 830,000 legal immigrants in California would lose insurance, in- cluding 286,000 children. Overall, the total number of uninsured persons in California would rise from 6.6 million to 7.4 million. Under this bill, these people would turn to county hospitals for care. And the costs of that care will be shifted to General Federal already operating on shoe string budgets. In Los Angeles County, this could mean as much as $240 million per year.

To say this is unfair is an understatement. Legal residents, who play by the rules and contribute over $90 billion a year in taxes, do not deserve this. They deserve what they earn; to be treated with the same care and provided with the same services enjoyed by the rest of the tax-paying community.

I encourage my colleagues to oppose these short-sighted cuts and unfair rule changes: Say no to a bad deal and vote against this re- ciprocity. Mr. ORTON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of this welfare reform bill. I commend this Congress for creating a flexible reform bill that will allow Utah and other inno- vative States to continue their successful wel- fare reform efforts.

My greatest concerns during the course of the welfare reform debate have been to trans- form the system to a work-based system, to ensure States like Utah have the flexibility to continue their successful reform efforts, and to protect innocent children. I have worked dili- gently with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to craft a bill that accomplishes these goals, and I am pleased to say that Congress has finally passed a bill that fulfills them.

I am extremely proud that this bill contains a provision that allows Utah to continue its successful welfare reform efforts. Under the bill that passed the House 2 weeks ago, Utah would have had to change its program to meet the restrictive Federal requirements contained in the bill. Instead, the bill, as estimated, that the earlier bill imposed $13 billion in unfunded costs on States unless they restricted eligibility or decreased assistance to those in need.
Both the National Governors’ Association and the State of Utah expressed concerns about this unfunded costs. I worked with members of the conference committee to address these concerns, and now we have a bill that really is feasible.

The bill that passed the House today contained several of the provisions proposed by myself and others who have worked over recent months to find bipartisan common ground on welfare reform. For instance, this conference report is much more flexible than the earlier House bill because it allows States to use their own participation definition in meeting Federal work participation requirements. It also reduces the unfunded costs in the bill substantially. Unlike the House version, the conference report maintains current protections against child abuse, guarantees that children do not lose their Medicaid health care coverage as a result of the bill, and provides States with the option to provide noncash assistance to children whose parents have reached the time limit. Finally, it improves upon maintenance of effort provisions and enforces the participation rates.

It wasn’t long ago that we were debating H.R. 4, an extreme proposal that would have eliminated 23 child protection programs like foster care and child abuse protection and replaced them with a block grant that contained $2.7 billion less funding than provided under current law. H.R. 4 would have eliminated nutrition programs like school lunch, school breakfast, the Summer Food and Adult Care Food Program, the Women, Infants and Children Program, and the Homeless Children Nutrition Program. The conference report restored them with two block grants that provided $6.6 billion less funding for nutrition than provided under current law. Although claims were made that there were no cuts to certain popular programs like school lunch, the truth was a State would have to eliminate or severely reduce all other programs in order to fully fund these high profile programs.

Even in the House version of welfare reform passed 2 weeks ago, children could have lost their Medicaid coverage as the result of the bill; current protections like TANF, funded and matched by the Federal Government, were stripped and States were prohibited from providing noncash assistance to children whose parents have reached the time limit. I am pleased that the conference report has corrected these provisions and protected children.

Previous bills, which I opposed, treated 4-year-old children like 40-year-old deadbeats. This bill is far better for children and far more flexible for States than any of the other welfare reform proposals that have been passed by this Congress. We finally have a bill that should be signed into law.

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, there is virtually universal agreement that our current welfare system is broken and must be dramatically overhauled. Americans are a compassionate people, eager to lend a helping hand to hard workers experiencing temporary difficulties and especially to children caught in two of circumstances beyond their control. But Americans also are a just people, expecting every- one to contribute as they are able and to take responsibility for themselves and their families.

It is the balancing of these two concerns that makes correcting our welfare system a chal- lenge, but a challenge which must be met.

This welfare reform conference report is far from perfect, but it clearly is preferable to con- tinuing the current system and preferable to welfare legislation considered earlier this Con- gress. For these reasons, we support the wel- fare reform conference report and have en- couraged the President to sign it.

We have opposed previous welfare reform proposals because we believed that they offered empty, unsustainable promises of mov- ing welfare recipients to work. Additionally, earlier bills were seriously deficient in their protections for children and other truly vulner- able populations. We have decided to support this conference report because it is consi- derably better than the welfare reform bill (H.R. 4) appropriately vetoed by the President last year and it also makes significant im- provements to the bill passed by the House last week. The conference committee agreed with our proposals giving States additional flexibility in moving welfare recipients to work, allowing States to use block grant funds to provide vouchers, and providing other protec- tions for children.

This conference report incorporates several improvements proposed by the National Gov- ernors’ Association. It provides $4 billion more funding for child care that will assist parents transitioning to work. It doubles the contingency fund for States facing larger welfare rolls caused by economic downturns. The latest bill returns to the guarantee of school lunch and child abuse prevention programs. The reductions in benefits for disabled children contained in last year’s H.R. 4 are eliminated, and greater allowances are made for hardship cases, increasing the hardship exemption from the benefit time limits to 20 percent of a State’s caseload.

Several changes proposed in the Castle- Tanner alternative were subsequently made to the bill passed by the House in July. The amount States must spend on child care was increased. Additionally, States will be required to assess the needs of welfare applicants and prepare an individual responsibility contract outlining a plan to move to work. Also, an in- crease in the State maintenance of effort for States that fail to meet the participation rates was added to the bill. All of these changes strengthen the effort of moving welfare recipi- ents to work.

The conference report further improved the bill. The conferees adopted our suggestions providing additional State flexibility in develop- ing work programs and adding additional pro- tections for children. We were disappointed that the conference did not incorporate con- structive suggestions that were made regarding penalties for failure to meet work require- ments and, unfortunately, an authorization for additional State block grant funds to provide additionalvod- ing health care to everyone. While the cor- rect is less than we had hoped, the con- ference report effectively reduces this cost shift to health care providers by more than half. The conference report also contains lan- guage very similar to the Castle-Tanner bill continuing current Medicaid eligibility rules for AFDC-related populations, ensuring that no one loses health care coverage as a result of welfare reform.

As we began by saying, this conference re- port is far from perfect and we continue to have concerns about the impact of several provisions. Although the report provides States with additional flexibility in implementing work programs, the work provisions in the bill still may impose unfunded mandates on States that will make it more difficult to move welfare recipients to work. Given the unfunded man- dates in the bill, the provisions penalizing States for failing to meet participation rates by removing $9 billion of Medicaid assistance from the health care system and re- sulting in a cost shift to health care providers that would affect the cost, availability, and quality of care of to everyone. While the cor- rect is less than we had hoped, the con- ference report effectively reduces this cost shift to health care providers by more than half. The conference report also contains lan- guage very similar to the Castle-Tanner bill continuing current Medicaid eligibility rules for AFDC-related populations, ensuring that no one loses health care coverage as a result of welfare reform.

The conference report now allows States that are implementing welfare waivers to go forward with those efforts. Specifically, the conference report allows those States to count individuals who are participating in State-authorized work programs in meeting the work participation rates in the bill, even when programs which they do not meet the Federal mandates in the bill.

States such as Tennessee and Texas that have just received waivers will be permitted to begin implementing these reforms and States like Utah and Michigan which have a track record in moving welfare recipients into self- sufficiency will be able to continue their pro- grams. We will work to ensure that States will continue to have this flexibility when their waivers expire if the State plan is successful. Another key goal we have maintained throughout the debate is protecting innocent children. The earlier House bill would have treated a 4-year-old child the same as a 24- year-old deadbeat by prohibiting States from using block grant funds to provide vouchers after the time limit for benefits to the parents had expired. The conference report avoids this extreme position. In addition, the con- ference report moderates the impact of the food stamp cuts on children by maintaining a guaranteed status for children and by increas- ing the housing deduction to $300 a month for families with children.

Third, we have been concerned about the impact of health coverage to individuals and payments to health providers as a result of welfare reform. The House bill effectively would have denied Medicaid to thousands of adults removing $9 billion of Medicaid as- sistance from the health care system and re- sulting in a cost shift to health care providers that would affect the cost, availability, and quality of care of to everyone. While the cor- rect is less than we had hoped, the con- ference report effectively reduces this cost shift to health care providers by more than half. The conference report also contains lan- guage very similar to the Castle-Tanner bill continuing current Medicaid eligibility rules for AFDC-related populations, ensuring that no one loses health care coverage as a result of welfare reform.

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As we began by saying, this conference re- port is far from perfect and we continue to have concerns about the impact of several provisions. Although the report provides States with additional flexibility in implementing work programs, the work provisions in the bill still may impose unfunded mandates on States that will make it more difficult to move welfare recipients to work. Given the unfunded man- dates in the bill, the provisions penalizing States for failing to meet participation rates by removing $9 billion of Medicaid assistance from the health care system and resulting in a cost shift to health care providers that would affect the cost, availability, and quality of care of to everyone. While the correction is less than we had hoped, the conference report effectively reduces this cost shift to health care providers by more than half. The conference report also contains language very similar to the Castle-Tanner bill continuing current Medicaid eligibility rules for AFDC-related populations, ensuring that no one loses health care coverage as a result of welfare reform.
reforms. We should enact this conference report and fix the current system now, moving toward a system that better promotes work and individual responsibility.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, as I was reading the papers this morning I noticed some stories that claimed that welfare reform proposal is not the end— that its significance has been overrated. That all sides are coming to a consensus and its not such a big deal after all.

In the short term, that’s how it may look. But in the long term, we are making a fundamental change to the status quo—we’ve gone beyond questioning the failed policies of the past—we are implementing a whole new approach. We are beginning to replace the welfare state with an opportunity society.

Ideas have consequences and bad ideas have bad consequences. The Great Society approach may have been well-intentioned, but the impact was tragic. We have done a dis-service to those who have fallen into the welfare trap. The incentives have been all wrong and the logic backward.

We need a welfare system that saves families, rather than breaking them. And that’s what this bill does.

Our welfare system has deprived people of hope, diminished opportunity and destroyed lives. Go into our inner cities and you will find a generation fed on food stamps but starved instead of nurturing and hope. You’ll meet young teens in their third pregnancy. You’ll meet fatherless children. You’ll talk to sixth graders who don’t know how many inches are in a foot. And you’ll talk to first-graders who don’t know their ABC’s.

It’s time for Washington to learn from its past mistakes. It’s time to reform our welfare system, to encourage families to stay together and to put recipients back to work.

That’s what our plan does. Four years ago, President Clinton promised to end welfare as we know it, and I am pleased that he has committed to sign our bill into law.

Our plan calls for sweeping child support enforcement. We end welfare for those who won’t cooperate on child support. We strengthen programs to establish paternity. We force hard, and they pay taxes. If they should fall into the welfare trap, the logical end result of all these inter-locutions is an unmitigated disaster upon America. To- day’s welfare system rewards and encourages the destruction of families, and childbirth out of wedlock. It penalizes work and learning. It poisons our communities and our country with generation after generation of welfare depend- ency. It robs human beings of hope and life and any opportunities at the American Dream.

In the name of compassion, and with good intentions, the welfare status quo is mean and
extreme to children. It is mean and extreme to families. It is mean and extreme to the hard-working Americans who foot the bill.

Thus, without a doubt, we must replace this mean, extreme, and failed system of welfare dependency with work, hope, and opportunity. We can do better. We will do better. We must do better. Americans want to work for a better life, and have a fighting chance to realize their own American dream. We un-

pledged to end welfare as we know it has not been kept. The President has not kept his promises. He raised taxes. And twice, he vetoed legislation to fulfill his own promise to end welfare. The President who pledged to end welfare as we know it has twice vetoed legislation to end welfare for illegal aliens.

Let me speak for a moment about illegal aliens. Illegal immigration is breaking our treasury, burdening California, and trying America’s patience. It is wrong for our welfare system to provide lavish benefits for persons in America illegally. Our legislation says so.

I am proud that the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act ends welfare for illegal aliens. It ends eligibility for Government programs for illegal aliens. It ends the taxpayer-funded red carpet for illegal aliens. Our plan is a strong message to those who jump our borders, violate our laws, and reside in America illegally: Go home. Stop freeloading off of hard-working American taxpayers.

Let me address the matter of legal immigrants. America is a beacon of hope and opportunity for the world. That is why we continue to have the most generous system of legal immigration that history has ever known. It is in America’s interest to invite those who want to work for a better life, and have a fighting chance at the American Dream. But we will not support those who come to America to be dependent upon our social safety net. Thus, our legislation places priority on helping American citizens first, and represents the values held by Americans.

For we are determined to liberate families from welfare dependency and get them work and a chance at the American Dream. We under-

stand that for many single parents, child care can make the difference between being able to work or not. That’s why or bill provides more and better child care, with less bureaucracy and more choices and resources for parents striving for a better life.

Here are the facts: This conference report provides $22 billion for child care over 7 years. That amounts to $4.5 billion over current law, and $1.7 billion more than President Clinton’s plan recommends. And we dramatically increase the money for child care and quality improvement. By investing in quality child care, we provide more families the opportunity to be free from welfare dependency and to strive for the American Dream.

In the end, this bill is what is about the best of America. We are a compassionate people, united by common ideals of freedom and opportunity. The great glory of this land of opportunity is the American Dream. Families trapped by welfare, and especially their children, have had this dream deferred. We can do better. And we do, through this legislation, because this is America. I urge the adoption of the conference report on H.R. 3734.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join in supplanting the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. As representatives of the people, we do not get as many opportunities as we would like to do something that will truly help improve the lives of the people we serve.

This bill presents us with just such an opportunity.

The landmark welfare reform plan before us today will bring education, training, and jobs to low-income Americans. It will replace welfare dependence with economic self-reliance. And it will create more hopeful futures for the children of participants.

This conference report is more than just a prescription for much-needed welfare reform. It is what I hope will be the first step in our bipartisan efforts to improve the public assistance programs on which disadvantaged families depend.

Last February, the Nation’s Republican and Democrat Governors unanimously endorsed welfare and Medicaid reform plans. And although the conference report before us today will give States the tools they need to improve their public assistance programs, our work is not done.

After all, welfare as we know it means more than AFDC. It includes food stamps, housing assistance, and energy assistance. And it includes medical assistance.

That’s right—4 million of Americans, Medicaid is welfare. That is because income assistance alone is not sufficient to meet the pressing needs of disadvantaged families.

For States, too, Medicaid is welfare. In fact, it makes up the largest share of State public assistance funding. As a share of State budgets, Medicaid is four times larger than AFDC.

If President Clinton does the right thing and signs this welfare reform bill into law, Medicaid will still be caught up in the choking bureaucratic redtape of Federal control. That is why the Medicaid program must be restructured in States to fully succeed in making public assistance programs more responsive and effective.

I commend my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their commitment to true welfare reform. And I look forward to continuing our efforts to make all sources of public assistance work better for those who need a helping hand up.

Thank you.

Mr. REED. Mr. Speaker, today’s vote is about choice. Today we begin the move from a status quo that no one approves of to a reformed and improved welfare system. Our current welfare system traps too many families in a cycle of dependency and does little to encourage or help such individuals find employment. Both welfare recipients and taxpayers lose if the status quo is maintained.

I have repeatedly stated that meaningful welfare reform should move recipients to work and protect children. Just 2 weeks ago, I supported a bipartisan welfare plan, authored by Republican Representative Michael Castle and Democrat Representative John Tanner, which I believe met these goals.

The conference agreement on H.R. 3734 is not perfect, but it is a good first step into an era of necessary welfare reform. This legislation contains many useful and necessary improvements over the previous welfare proposals put forth by the Republican majority. In fact, this legislation has moved several steps closer to the Castle-Tanner bill.

The agreement ensures that low-income mothers and children retain their Medicaid eligibility; provides increased child care funding; removes the optional food stamp block grant; removes the adoption and foster care block grant; and allows States to use a portion of their Federal funding to provide assistance to those who choose to get off welfare because of the 5-year time limit.

While this legislation attempts to protect children from the shortcomings and failures of their parents, it does not fulfill all of my goals for welfare reform. I am concerned that H.R. 3734 fails to provide adequate Federal resources for States to implement work programs, nor does it contain adequate resources for States and individuals in the event of a severe recession.

In addition, the legislation makes cuts in food stamps for unemployed individuals willing to work and contains legal immigrant provisions that will deny access by legal immigrant children to SSI, food stamps, and other benefits. These concerns should be rectified by this and subsequent Congresses. I am committed to achieving this goal, and therefore, I am pleased that the President plans to propose legislation to repeal many of these provisions.

Furthermore, several States are currently working on plans to reform their welfare reform systems. We must ensure that these efforts are accommodated by the legislation.

This is the first Republican proposal which adequately acknowledges the need to protect children, while emphasizing work. Rhode Island, through the work of a coalition of State officials, business leaders, and advocacy groups, has crafted a welfare reform plan that also accomplishes these goals. Should H.R. 3734 prove detrimental to Rhode Island or the children of Rhode Island, I will work to make necessary changes to further strengthen the Nation’s welfare reform efforts.

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make the headlines. By denying convicted felons and noncitizens taxpayer-funded assistance we take away the scourge previously associated with all welfare benefits. We create a new benevolent program and therefore a positive and refreshing atmosphere for its recipients.

Along with increased sense of self-worth that necessarily comes with a pay check that isn’t a donation comes a greater sense of personal responsibility. Our reform promotes self-responsibility in an attempt to half rising illegitimacy rates. Once we diminish illegitimacy we can truly end the cycle of dependency created by our current welfare state.

As a condition for benefit eligibility, a mother must identify the father. This will ensure that single parents get the support they need and remind fathers that their children is their responsibility, not the State’s.

Our welfare reform plan gives power and flexibility back to the States. I think this is the provision that gives the proponents of the current welfare system the most heartburn. The block grants give the power and flexibility once enjoyed by big government advocates to our Nation’s Governors and State legislatures. Longer will Washington power brokers be able to dictate who gets and how much they get. Perhaps, those who know the solutions for their unique challenges won’t have to wait for bureaucratic approval to put their programs in action.

Mr. Speaker, not only is this reform plan hisoric. It is future. This plan ends welfare as we know it and helps us see a society which encourages all of its members to be productive and self-reliant.

Mr. FRANKS of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, this welfare reform conference bill brings us one step closer to fixing a welfare system that has been broken and in need of major repairs. We have had a welfare system that has caused generations of American citizens to live in poverty and become consumed by a condition of hopelessness and despair. We have had a welfare system that placed the dependency upon a monthly stipend instead of employment as a viable solution to overcome poverty.

I strongly believe in the American dream where each individual is given the opportunity to work and with their family and friends to achieve a decent standard of living in our society. The current welfare system has taken that dream away from too many Americans.

The conference committee bill represents the change that will place the welfare program back into the hands of the States so that States can implement programs that best fit the needs of their welfare constituents. The bill will reinforce the American principle in which parents are responsible for the well-being of their children. Welfare recipients will be required to identify the absent father, and all able-bodied parents will be expected to work to provide for the needs of their children. The bill strengthens child support enforcement so that absent fathers will be located and required to pay their support. The conference committee bill encourages States to implement the debit card for disbursement of welfare funds and food stamps. No longer will welfare recipients be able to use welfare funds to purchase illegal drugs. The bill will bring greater accountability in the spending of American taxpayer’s money.

This conference committee bill will lead to greater self-sufficiency. The bill will give families who have had to live in poverty a new chance for a better life and an opportunity to participate in the American dream. I urge support for the conference committee bill.

Mrs. COLLINS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I have heard of a rush to anger and a rush to judgment. What we have here is a rush to the floor. We’re told an agreement on a conference committee report to H.R. 3734 was made near midnight last night. I haven’t seen the conference committee report, nor what’s in the conference agreement. I read what’s in the National Journal’s Congress Daily/A&M edition and the Congressional Quarterly’s House Action Reports “Conference Summary.” The Congressional Quarterly Action Report includes the disclaimer that they haven’t seen the conference agreement report either, but prepared a morning briefing anyway, using information provided by committee staff. Well, excuse me.

I don’t consider it appropriate to rely only on some 1 hour of debate to consider a bill written by someone who hasn’t read the report before casting my vote on behalf of my constituents. I want to have a copy of the legislation available and that’s why we have the rule that we don’t vote on a conference agreement the same day it is reported.

In my 23 years in the Congress, I have been accustomed to reading and studying legislation before I cast my vote on behalf of the Seventh District of Illinois, a responsibility I take very seriously. The House has rushed into an alarming debate, rules designed to keep us from rushing to judgment. Those rules dictate that we don’t vote on conference reports the same day they are filed so that we have time to study the provisions. That’s why there is a two-thirds majority vote requirement to overturn that rule.

So why are we being asked to waive the time requirement and go immediately to a vote on this conference report? We are told we will have 1 hour of debate on the rule that will give us 1 hour of debate to consider a special rule to waive the two-thirds vote requirement. Why? Because once again the Gingrich Republicans are trying to force legislation through the process without adhering to the safeguards established to protect the American people and their way of life.

I object to this rule and urge my colleagues to defeat this rule so that America has a chance to look at what we are being asked to approve as new changes, major revisions really, in the provisions and control of public assistance programs that provide a safety net for the needy and vulnerable among us. I owe it to my constituents to study legislation and weigh the measure before casting my vote for them. Let’s get back to reasoned debate, let’s follow the rules and let’s listen to what the recipients of the benefits provided or denied under this bill to follow. Let’s stop changing the rules as it suits the desires of the Gingrich Republicans. I urge my colleagues to defeat this motion to change the rules. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, there is perhaps no more urgent issue in America today than ending welfare dependency.

In place of a welfare program built around welfare checks, we need a program built around helping people get paycheck. We need to move people toward work and independence. And we need to be tough on work and protective of children.

When the work on welfare reform started last year, the Republican proposals were weak on work, tough on kids, and the President was right to veto them.

Unfortunately, the bill before us today, while a significant improvement on the earlier version, still falls short in both regards.

On work, the bill is, in fact, too weak, for it underfunds employment assistance by $13 billion. According to the Congressional Budget Office, a $13 billion shortfall is a guarantee we can no longer meet the employment requirements in this bill. So we have missed an opportunity to make these poor families self-supporting.

On children, the bill is, in fact, too weak in its child care provisions; it is too harsh in the manner children are punished for the failures of their parents; and it is far too extreme in its potential to push an additional 1 million children into poverty.

I am also deeply concerned by the fundamental premise of this legislation. There are many absent fathers and many absent fathers today are sincerely committed to using a welfare block grant to raise the well-being and quality of life of people within their States. And as I listen to them, I hear a haunting echo of a situation which occurred some years ago when I was a young, well-intended State legislator myself included, voted to transition the mentally ill in Oregon into mainstream society. The concept seemed solid, as the welfare block grant seems to many Governors. But when the 1980’s recession hit Oregon, the commitments we made to the mentally ill—similar in so many ways to the commitment the Governors today are making to their welfare recipients—simply came undone. And today, many years later, the mentally ill of Oregon still live on the streets, and Oregon’s neighbors and local governments are struggling under the burden of serving this neglected population.

This, Mr. Speaker, is what I fear we face when the next recession rumbles through this land. When times get tough, and resources are limited the welfare funds are, at times, dried up. Those who are struggling under the burden of providing for their families are forced to make choices that can hurt the most. Will it be our schools? Our ports? Our highway funds? Our economic competitiveness programs? Or will it be those who are struggling to find a route out of poverty?

We have a chance today to re-examine, plan, safeguard, standards, and funding, welfare reform will likewise turn into a nightmare not just for the poor, but for the people in our community ill-equipped to deal with the consequences of another experiment that backfires.

Mr. POSHARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this conference agreement on welfare reform. This is truly an important moment in my legislative career and in the history of the House. I trust our judgement today will be persevering in years to come.

I have supported welfare reform with my work and with my votes during this session. I voted for the bill proposed by my colleague from Georgia, Congressman DeLay, and for the bill most recently proposed by a bipartisan coalition led by Congressmen CASTLE and TANNER.

By voting for those bills, and opposing the bills which were passed but vetoed by the President, we have been able to move toward a sensible middle ground, a tough yet humane bill which is worthy of our support. I will enter into the RECORD at this point a number of improvements which helped earn my support for this legislation.
Unlike the House bill, the Conference Agreement forces states wanting to transfer funds between block grants to transfer those funds specifically into child care and social services block grants.

The Agreement also states the flexibility to implement pilot welfare programs like the one being put into place in Illinois. [A part of the Castle-Tanner Plan] states that states may use federal funds to provide vouchers and health and food stamp benefits to children through the five year time limitation. By establishing the bill, the Agreement states that states have the option of continuing benefits in the form of a voucher.

The Conference Agreement provides additional funding to meet the requirements by allowing states that are implementing plans under federal waivers to count individuals who are participating in work programs under the waiver in meeting the work participation ratios in the bill, even if the hours of work or the definition of work in the state plan do not meet the mandates in the bill.

The Agreement does not include the House provision that would have prohibited states from using block grant funds to make cash payments to families that have an additional child while on welfare.

Unlike the House bill, the Conference Agreement does not give states the option to receive food assistance in the form of a block grant, instead of under the regular Food Stamp program. The bill retains the current Food Stamp program. [A major part of the Castle-Tanner Plan]

The Conference Agreement decreased the amount cut from the Food Stamp program by $2.3 billion. (The Agreement cuts the Food Stamp program by $23.3 billion over six years.)

Tightens SSI eligibility criteria to restrict eligibility to children who meet the medicaid listing and the individualized functional assessment and references to maladaptive behavior are repealed. [Criteria contained in Castle-Tanner Plan] All children meeting medical listings will be eligible for SSI benefits.

The House bill restricted Food Stamps benefits for able-bodied, unemployed adults who have children who are between the ages of 18 and 50—limiting Fod Stamp benefits for this group to three months over their lifetime. The Agreement provides such individuals with Food Stamps for three months out of every three years, with the possibility of another three months within that period. [Moved closer to the Castle-Tanner Plan]

Under the agreement, all families currently receiving welfare and Medicaid benefits will continue to be eligible for the Medicaid program. In addition, there is a one year transition period for Medicaid for those transitioning into the workforce.

The Conference Agreement does not deny Medicaid benefits for legal immigrants retroactively and applies the ban on benefits for five years instead of until citizenship to legal immigrants.

The Agreement retains the current Family Preservation and Support program, which is a preventive program designed to teach preventive parenting skills before a child must be removed to foster care. The House bill would have replaced the program with a block grant.

The Agreement includes $500 million more than the House bill for a fund to reward states that are effective in moving people from welfare to work, preserving two-parent families, and reducing the out-of-wedlock births.

I come from a rural area. I know times can be tough. But I also grew up on a farm where we worked for everything we ever had, and where we took care of each other. Most of the people I represent in the 19th district have similar backgrounds. They know that jobs can be lost or families can break apart and that we need to look after our neighborhood. But they also want that neighbor to take responsibility for their children and for them to look for work if they’re able.

This bill helps us respect those old-fashioned traditions in a modern world. It helps us move people from welfare to work, helps us save money in the program, and gives the states the flexibility to meet the needs of their people.

We should be prepared to revisit this bill if in fact children are left behind as some critics fear. But today, we should embrace this proposal with courage and faith, confident that we are changing not only the construct but also the culture of welfare.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of reforming the welfare system. As the American people know, the current welfare system is in desperate need of reform. For public aid families, welfare provides for those people who exploit the welfare system, and for the taxpayers who foot the bills, an overhaul of welfare in America is a high priority.

The fundamental problem with our current system is that for many people welfare becomes a way of life. For some who enroll in the primary welfare program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), welfare becomes a trap they cannot escape. Some are afraid to lose the health benefits they receive through Medicaid. Others are unable to secure child care to enable them to go to work. We must eliminate these barriers and chart a clear path for welfare recipients to go after a paycheck instead of a welfare check. Welfare should be viewed as temporary assistance, not a lifestyle.

I believe welfare benefits should be cut off for recipients who are unwilling to pursue work, education or training. I also believe we must strengthen child support enforcement. Billions of dollars in child support payments go uncollected each year. Unpaid child support payments makes many of the changes needed to reform the welfare system. It will move people from welfare to work, and it provides child care funding and Medicaid to help people make the move from a welfare check to a paycheck. It maintains nutritional guarantees. And it includes child support provisions to press deadbeat parents to provide care so their children do not end up on welfare.

This legislation before the House today cuts nutritional assistance too deeply, which will be harmful to children and may force some working families to continue to choose between paying the rent and putting food on the table. I will vote for the legislation that is now before the House because it makes many of the changes that must be made to change welfare from a way of life to a helping hand. And I will work with the President to correct the problems in this legislation that have nothing to do with welfare reform.

Mr. FAZIO of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my support for the conference agreement before us and to voice my gratitude to the many members of the Democratic Caucus who have worked long and hard to improve a welfare reform bill that we are considering today. They have increased the awareness of their colleagues and have worked for a whole range of improvements which have moderated some of the bill’s original provisions. I truly appreciate these efforts.

While this conference agreement isn’t perfect, it represents a step in the right direction. This agreement acknowledges the view that
welfare should be a second chance for those in need, not a way of life.

This agreement sets a 5-year time limit on receiving benefits, includes tough welfare-to-work requirements, and allows States to decide how best to meet the needs of their citizens.

I am pleased to see that the conference agreement moved toward the President’s position on a number of important issues, especially the removal of a provision that would have allowed States to opt out of the food stamp program. This will help keep the nutritional safety net intact for our kids. In addition, I am pleased that strong child support enforcement provisions have been included in this agreement.

The agreement that we’re voting on today is the first step toward a much-needed overhaul of our welfare system. It strengthens both fiscal and personal responsibility and it breaks the cycle of dependence.

I urge my colleagues to support this conference agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 3734, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, a bill which would dramatically overhaul our Nation’s welfare system.

On July 18, 1996, I joined with 170 of my colleagues to adopt my amendment to H.R. 3734. After reviewing the product of the conference committee, my position remains unchanged.

During this session of Congress, our Republican colleagues assured us a family friendly Congress. They promised us that our children would be protected from harm. However, this bill is not about helping our families, nor is it about saving our children. The primary purpose of this bill is to achieve more than $61 billion in budget cuts. And unfortunately, those who will suffer most from this legislation will be those who need assistance the most, our children, and the poor.

Seven months ago, President Clinton was forced to veto a welfare bill which, much like the bill before us today, would place an alarming number of children into poverty. According to the President’sOffice, H.R. 3734 would push 1.5 million children into poverty. I appeal to President Clinton to veto this measure which abandons the Federal commitment and safety net that protects America’s children.

H.R. 3734 slashes more than $61 billion over 6 years in welfare programs. This bill guts funding for the Food Stamp Program, cuts into the SSI protections for disabled children, drastically cuts child nutrition programs, and slashes benefits for legal immigrants. Mr. Speaker, I find these reductions in quality of life programs appalling.

Mr. Speaker, I believe most of us agree that our Nation’s welfare system is in the need of reform. But do we reform the system by denying benefits to legal immigrants who, despite working hard and paying taxes, fall upon hard times? How can we demand that welfare recipients work 50 hours a week, yet provide inefficient job training and job services—essential components in contributing to longevity in the workplace? In short, how can we justify punishing children and their families simply because they exist?

If we are truly to talk about the reform of welfare, if we are going to talk about increasing opportunities for our low-income residents, we cannot expect productive changes for our community by taking away from those who already have very little.

Mr. Speaker, I can understand and support a balanced and thoughtful approach to addressing the reform of our Nation’s welfare system. However, I cannot support this legislation which will shatter the lives of millions of our Nation’s poor.

The pledge to end welfare as we know it is not a mandate to act irresponsibly and without compassion. On behalf of America’s children and the poor, please urge my colleagues to vote against H.R. 3734.

Mrs. COLLINS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the conference agreement on H.R. 3734, legislation that revises our current law providing welfare to needy children, individuals, and families in America. This welfare revision does little more than poke holes in the safety net that is called welfare. In my opinion, this legislation is a desperate—and unsuccessful—attempt to claim reform when it is an illogical revision. Change merely for change’s sake can address chronic, growing, and nurturing environment.

Some of my constituents in the Seventh District of Illinois are among the poorest of the Nation. For the 23½ years that I have served in this body, I have fought strong and sometimes bitter battles for the benefit of the vulnerable, the disenfranchised, the young, old, disabled, and poor. That is what I hope to be remembered for when I retire from the House at the end of the year.

So, I feel I have an obligation to rise today in opposition to the conference agreement developed in the 11th hour by a few secretly selected Members of Congress. I continue to be concerned that we are applying Band-Aid policy and control instead of prevention and early intervention. The funds provided in current law attempt to address chronic, growing, and nurturing environment.

I was contacted this morning by the Day-Care Council of Illinois, located in Chicago, who reminded me that President Franklin Roosevelt, under whose leadership the safety net for our most vulnerable children and families was established some 60 years ago once said: “The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

We do too often take away the Federal oversight of funds that are channeled into State and local coffers in the form of block grants; reduce the Food Stamp program in the name of budget deficit; deny benefits to legal immigrants; and make children-having-children adults. But, for children, these conditions that failed them as teenage parents instead of supporting communities in their efforts to provide stable, dependable support systems. Whether that support is supplied by the teen parent’s biological or substitute parent, or a publicly funded shelter, should be the decision of that child-parent, not the Federal Government.

Block granting welfare benefits is likely to block grant suffering. I can only hope that if this legislation passes, sufficient Federal criteria and oversight can make them work. The States have asked for block grants and will be called upon to demonstrate that they can act responsibly to all vulnerable populations in a non-discriminatory manner. My fear and recollection of contemporary history is that many of them will not.

On the issue of Medicaid eligibility, until and unless Congress can achieve meaningful health care reform to provide for universal access to health care financing, there must be Medicaid eligibility for the unemployed, uninsured, and families who receive public assistance. The well-being of our children is what public welfare should be all about; and we should focus on how best we can prevent and protect the vulnerable children of our Nation from experiencing poverty and despair, against hunger and sickness, and against fear and helplessness.

I urge my colleagues to reject this rush to agreement. I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. VELAZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the welfare conference agreement. This bill is an outrage. It constitutes the latest chapter in the right wing majority’s all-out attack on children and the poor.

Let’s get real. Less than 2 percent of Federal dollars are spent on assisting poor women and children. Yet radicals are ramming a bill down our throats that does nothing more than single out and punish children in the name of deficit reduction.

Many on the other side of the aisle are under the false assumption that all we need to do to eliminate poverty is take food and money away from poor people. But I have news for you—this sink or swim approach will not work. According to the Urban Institute this bill would push 1.1 million children into poverty and eliminate their ability to count on basic income support.

The worse tragedy of all is that this cruel bill comes up short on jobs. Cutting financial assistance to poor families without money for job creation, job training and day care will not force recipients to swim but cause millions of poor children to drown.

The real problem is that in poor areas like the one I represent there simply are not enough jobs for people. In fact in some areas in NYC there are 14 applicants for every one fast-food job.

Let’s end this charade. I implore my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, to support fairness and basic decency and reject this heartless legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the conference report.

There was no objection. The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the conference report.

Pursuant to House Resolution 495, the yeas and nays are ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 328, nays 101, not voting 5, as follows:

YEA—328

Ackerman    Baesler    Bar
Allard       Baker (CA)  Barrett (NE)
Andrews     Baker (LA)   Bartlett
Baldacci     Barlow     Bass
Bachus       Balenger   Bateman
Baer

[Roll No. 389]

YEA—328
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

July 31, 1996

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous matter on the conference report on H.R. 3734.

The Speaker, pro tempore (Mr. ARMEEY), to which the request of the gentleman from Florida? There was no objection.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3603, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1997

Mr. GOSS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 104-730) on the resolution (H. Res. 497) waiving points of order against the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 3517) making appropriations for military construction, family housing, and base realignment and closure for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1997, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3517, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1997

Mr. GOSS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 104-732) on the resolution (H. Res. 498) waiving points of order against the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 3230) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1997 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 1997, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM ACT

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I ask unanimous consent that the bill (H.R. 3230) to amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 to support the International Dolphin Conservation Program in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Resources. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. In lieu of a report recommended by the Committee on Resources now printed in the bill, it shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purposes of amendment the report of the committee of the whole House on the state of the Union for 1996.

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 1(b) of rule XXIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3230) to amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 to support the International Dolphin Conservation Program in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Resources. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. In lieu of a report recommended by the Committee on Resources now printed in the bill, it shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purposes of amendment the report of the committee of the whole House on the state of the Union for 1996.