



Addressing Poverty at the Federal Level

COMPILED BY THE BRETHREN WITNESS/WASHINGTON OFFICE

The following is an annotated glossary of terms and programs of the federal government related to domestic poverty issues. For the most recent information, contact the Church of the Brethren Washington Office.

Food Stamp Program. The Food Stamp Program is a federally funded method of providing monthly coupons to low-income families. The program works for those families who are most in need: over one third of food stamp households have gross incomes below half the U.S. poverty line. Food Stamp Program fiscal increases depend on acts of Congress. The program does not match inflation rates, and increases do not occur annually. The most recent increase occurred as a part of the 2002 Farm Bill.

WIC Program. The Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC Program) is a federally funded nutrition program that provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, and access to health care to low-income pregnant women, new mothers, and infants and children at nutritional risk. The Agriculture Appropriations Bill determines annual funding for the program.

“Welfare,” or direct cash assistance. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF, pronounced “Tan-Eff”) was instituted in 1996 as part of the Clinton administration’s landmark welfare reform bill. TANF was evaluated by the Bush administration in 2002. Anti-poverty advocates are interested in reducing poverty, which often is distinctive from welfare caseload reduction. Pointedly, former wel-

fare recipients with full-time jobs still need other forms of assistance such as education, training, and child care support. Current 2002 TANF bills seek to address these issues as part of a comprehensive welfare package that moves beyond cash assistance and into a family-sustaining living environment. The vote in Congress to reauthorize TANF was pushed back to September 2003.

Immigration. This is often included within anti-poverty initiatives since immigrants (legal immigrants, in particular) are at times economically classified as working class citizens. In 1996, legal immigrants lost most rights to receive food stamps, as well as rights to cash assistance from Federal welfare initiatives. The 2002 Farm Bill granted greater access to legal immigrants in the receipt of food stamps, but restrictions still apply to the US citizens in the interest of temporary cash assistance. Contact the Brethren Witness/ Washington Office for current information on both issues.

Charitable Choice. This is a congressional effort to expand the participation of religious organizations in publicly funded social service programs. Often Charitable Choice provisions and amendments are included in social service related bills. Charitable Choice effectively encourages religious participation in social services and often decreases the amount of

federal funding appropriated annually by Congress. The effort has been supported by both the Clinton and Bush administrations.

White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Created in the spring of 2001 by President Bush, this initiative is an expansion of the Clinton administration's "Center for Community and Interfaith Partnerships" program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The "Faith Based-Initiative" encourages programs like Charitable Choice provi-

sions and becomes an organizing office for federal volunteer efforts such as Americorps and the Peace Corps.

For further information visit www.brethren.org/genbd/washofc/index.htm or write or call the Brethren Witness/Washington Office, 337 North Carolina Ave. SE, Washington, DC 20003; 202 546-3202.