



## A Welfare Story

In perusing the August 22 issue of *The New American*, I learned that Maine's Governor Paul LePage has come under fire in recent months for installing limitations on the federal food-stamp program, SNAP. His limitations, explained in the Correction Please section of that issue, consisted of the following:



For "Adults between the ages of 18 and 49 who are not disabled and do not have children to support", the governor "instituted a three-month SNAP limit (every three years) on such recipients unless they work 20 hours a week, take a state job-training course, or volunteer about six hours a week."

Within just a few months of this change, the number of ABAWDS (Able bodied adults without dependents) on SNAP dropped by 80 percent, and it was estimated that if the entire country enacted the same restrictions as Maine, it could save tax payers \$9.7 billion dollars a year.

LePage continued with his reform by then trying to limit SNAP purchases to only healthy foods. The U.S. Department of Agriculture rejected this move, and it is even posted on the SNAP official website as follows:

Several times in the history of SNAP, Congress had considered placing limits on the types of food that could be purchased with program benefits. However, they concluded that designating foods as luxury or non-nutritious would be administratively costly and burdensome.

LePage's response to this, as quoted in Correction Please, was to say that the Obama administration "goes to great lengths to police the menu of K-12 cafeterias, but looks the other way as billions of taxpayer dollars finance a steady diet of Mars bars and Mountain Dew."

Two things need to be known here: 1) Governor LePage's administration would be responsible for upholding the changes to the SNAP benefits. Even though SNAP is a federal program, the states do have some control over how it's operated in their state. 2) Since when has the federal government ever been concerned about saving money? Is it not currently \$20 trillion in debt? There's obviously an ulterior motive here.

Now, my first thought when reading this article, was, "If someone like myself (age 30, healthy, no kids) isn't working at least 20 hours a week, what are they doing, and why?"

I know from first-hand experience that some people have disabilities — personality disorders or physical impairments — that prevent them from working. But I also know that for many, it's just easier to be on welfare. Let me explain.

I grew up in a Democrat household, raised to believe that the wealthy should share their earnings.



Written by [Robin Kinderman](#) on October 4, 2016

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While I was in college, I discovered that I could work a mere 16 hours a week and — because I was a student living on my own — qualify for nearly \$300 per month in SNAP benefits. I knew I was taking advantage of the system, but I justified it by never buying junk food. I used that money to eat like a queen — steaks, fruit, veggies, etc. I may have been a college student, but I didn't eat like one.

Fast forward a year or two, and I'm working at a convenience store. It doesn't take me long to realize that I don't want to be a SNAP recipient any more. Let me paint you a picture:

One of our regulars was a young guy, about 18-19 years old. Every few days he came in and bought a pack of Swisher Sweets (flavored cigarillos), an energy drink, and a bag of chips. He paid for the energy drink and chips with his SNAP card. We saw him several times behind our store, cutting open the cigarillos to empty the contents and then fashion a flavored joint.

Another regular, an older guy, came in every day and bought a 30-pack of beer, a two-liter soda, and a five-dollar scratch-off lottery ticket. He paid for the soda with his SNAP card. Considering that he was there every day at 8:00 a.m. to get his beer, I find it highly unlikely that he held a job.

The worst one was a young woman — in her 20s — who was overweight, rude, and unkempt. She did her grocery shopping at our store. Every few days she came in and — since we didn't have carts — made a pile on the counter: cold cuts, beef jerky, string cheese, candy bars, chips, bread, hot dogs, a 12-pack or two of soda, and some ice cream bars. This was paid for with her SNAP card. Then we'd ring up her 30-pack of beer, her two or three packs of cigarettes, her tabloid magazine, and \$15-\$20 worth of lottery tickets. I noticed too that she always had the latest hi-tech phone, and her nails were done in a French manicure.

This is no joke — I am not exaggerating. I saw this day in and day out — dozens of people using their SNAP cards to buy junk, and spending their cash on beer, cigarettes, and lottery tickets.

Many of these people lived in the trailer park behind the convenience store. It seemed that since they had nothing better to do, a stop at my store was part of their daily routine, and they had no problem hanging out and sharing their life stories, as if we were in a bar. Over the years, I discovered that, while some of them were on disability, many of them were not. I'd wonder why they wouldn't want to better their situation and why they didn't save their money — rather than spending it on lottery tickets — and try to move up in the world? The answer: It's easier to stay on welfare.

As I mentioned previously, during my first year of college, I discovered that I could work only 16 hours a week and get by just fine, thanks to SNAP. After a while, though, I had to work more in order to pay bills, and because I was earning more, my SNAP money decreased. I soon found myself in a difficult situation — I was working more but I had less.

In Wisconsin, the income cut-off for food assistance is \$981 per month, after taxes, for one person. That \$981 is the Federal Poverty Level, as defined by Congress every year. I worked at the convenience store an average of 35 hours a week, for \$8.00 per hour. This comes to \$1,120 per month. Factor in Wisconsin's income tax of 5.84 percent, and it's \$1,055. Once other monthly expenses are added in — rent, gas, heat/electric, phone, Internet, hygiene, miscellaneous expenses — even if living cheaply, it starts to get tight. A person has a difficult time living off \$1,000 a month, let alone putting aside money to get ahead. If I made a little less, I could still get SNAP, so it made sense to work less and receive more benefits.

If working less was my solution, it has to be the solution for other people too. Why would you work more just to struggle more?



Written by [Robin Kinderman](#) on October 4, 2016

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So what is the real problem here? The problem is that welfare was created for the stated purpose of helping people out of poverty, but because it rewards the unambitious and lazy, it has become a way of life. It is also way, way too easy to qualify for assistance.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities website, \$75 billion was spent on SNAP in the 2015 fiscal year. This website also states that SNAP “is the nation’s most important anti-hunger program. In 2015, it helped more than 45 million low-income Americans to afford a nutritionally adequate diet in a typical month.” Um, let’s go back to my previous real-life experience, and the fact that the SNAP website even says, “Soft drinks, candy, cookies, snack crackers, and ice cream are food items and are therefore eligible items.”

This one program spends more money than the GDP of 123 countries, and little to nothing is done to reduce waste and limit the program to those who are truly needy and unable to support themselves — as opposed to those who choose not to.

The American Dream used to consist of the freedom to get ahead by working hard, and it was dreamed by hard-working individuals who wanted to prosper and rise above the rest. It wasn’t about enabling a bunch of overweight 30-somethings to sit on their butts and eat pints of ice cream.

The short video clip “Not Yours To Give” sums it up well, when a civilian says to Congressman Colonel Davy Crockett:

Colonel, you have the right to give to one. You have the right to give to all. And since the Constitution neither defines charity nor stipulates the amount, you are at liberty to give whatever you think proper to whomever you darn wish. So you see Colonel, this opens a big barn door — not only for fraud and corruption and favoritism on the one hand — but for robbing the people on the other. No sir, Colonel, Congress has no right to give to charity.



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