



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on October 18, 2012

Welfare Spending Rose 32 Percent Since Obama Took Office

The government spent lavishly in fiscal 2011, especially on federal welfare programs, doling out more than \$1 trillion on 83 means-tested programs — the year's largest expenditure and a startling 32 percent increase since President Obama entered the White House. According to [new data](#) released by the Senate Budget Committee, compiled based on a new Congressional Research Service (CRS) study, the combination of state and federal welfare spending is more than the government spends on Medicare, Social Security, or non-war defense.



The report omits spending on Medicare, Social Security, healthcare for veterans without disabilities, and means-tested veterans pension plans. According to CRS research, federal welfare spending spiked from \$563 billion in fiscal year 2008 to \$746 billion in fiscal year 2011, a towering 32-percent increase. Furthermore, spending on the 10 largest federal welfare programs has doubled as a share of the budget in the last three decades. Adjusted for inflation, according to Republicans on the Senate Budget Committee, this dollar amount has increased 378 percent in that three-decade time frame.

Food assistance programs, the third largest welfare program behind cash and health assistance, encountered the largest spending hike, with 71 percent more spending in 2011 than in 2008. Growth under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, was the chief stimulant to the spending hike. The Daily Caller provided [further details](#) on the CRS analysis:

CRS further noted that the largest expenditure category, health, was 37 percent higher in fiscal year 2011 than fiscal year 2008. In that same period, cash aid increased 12 percent, education assistance increased 57 percent, housing and development assistance increased 2 percent, social services increased 3 percent, employment and training remained the same (though fluctuated in intervening years), and energy assistance was 67 percent higher in fiscal year 2011 than fiscal year 2008.

The total federal spending on federal welfare programs vastly outpaced fiscal year 2011 spending on such federal expenditures as non-war defense (\$540 billion), Social Security (\$725 billion), Medicare (\$480 billion), and departments such as Justice (\$30.5 billion), Transportation (\$77.3 billion) and Education (\$65.486 billion) — a fact that alarmed the ranking member of the Senate Budget Committee, Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, who requested the report from CRS.

Sen. Sessions, who released the figures October 18 and has been leading a campaign to suppress aggressive and unchecked spending on SNAP benefits and other government programs, says the data indicate that federal welfare assistance is not functioning as intended. "These astounding figures demonstrate that the United States spends more on federal welfare than any other program in the



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federal budget,” he wrote The Daily Caller in an e-mail. “It is time to restore — not retreat from — the moral principles of the 1996 welfare reform. Such reforms, combined with measures to promote growth, will help both the recipient and the Treasury.”

The Alabama Senator added in a statement that welfare should not be used as a means to form dependence, but to establish a temporary assistance program that helps disadvantaged individuals become financially independent. “No longer should we measure compassion by how much money the government spends but by how many people we help to rise out of poverty,” he [asserted](#). “Welfare assistance should be seen as temporary whenever possible, and the goal must be to help more of our fellow citizens attain gainful employment and financial independence.”

Mr. Sessions, who has heavily scrutinized the expanding food stamps rolls, blasted the Obama administration for encouraging the food stamp expansion through deliberate promotion and a disregard for self-sufficiency. In fact, the administration continues to [argue](#) that every five dollars in SNAP spending delivers nearly 10 dollars in economic benefit.

According to the Heritage Foundation, welfare spending has [long surpassed](#) the dollar amount spent on defense. In 1993, government assistance programs exceeded overall spending on national defense for the first time since the Great Depression, and in subsequent years, the average ratio of welfare to defense spending was about \$1.33 to \$1. But the president’s spending measures would only boost this disparity, Heritage reports: Ten years from now, there will be a staggering \$2.33 in state and federal welfare spending for every dollar spent on national defense.

Sessions and his Republican colleagues acknowledged that “persistently weak GDP growth” is “unquestionably a factor” in the precipitous rise in government assistance programs. However, they added, federal policy has “explicitly encouraged growth in welfare enrollment — combined with a weakening of welfare standards and rules.”



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