

Poverty - Discussion Guide

AGENDA:

- Social Time (30 min)
- Within each group identify who will be:
 - **Timekeeper** to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak
 - **Scribe** to take a few notes of what has been discussed and post a summary on the Policy Circle website
 - **Reporter** who will report back to the bigger group what was discussed
 - **Facilitator** to keep the conversation going around the circle, asking some questions from this guide if necessary. The role of the facilitator is to invite each member to share her perspective and help focus the conversation on understanding the issue and how to become an influencer.
- #CircleUp: Circle discussion (45-60 min)
- Circle Recap (20 min): the reporter and the scribe report back to the larger group what was discussed.
- Next Steps (15 min):
 - Discuss how to influence policy making (e.g. attend town hall meetings, write op-eds).
 - Determine date for the next meeting.
 - Decide on topic for next meeting. The circle could go deeper on the topic covered, focus on state issue or use another brief available in the [Year of Conversations](#) from The Policy Circle website.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- What do you think the role of government should be in fighting poverty?
- What do you see your role to be in fighting poverty?
- What should we be asking our legislators to do and how could we reach them?
- Do you think our current social welfare system remains true to Thomas Jefferson's sense of government's obligation to the poor in the early American era?
- What can we do to reform the current anti-poverty programs?
- What do you think about the Kemp Forum's proposals for fighting poverty?

- What are other ways we can empower and enable people to achieve upward mobility, specifically in our respective communities?

KEY FACTS:

- The \$22 trillion U.S. taxpayers have spent on anti-poverty programs does not include Social Security or Medicare.
- In 2014 the poverty rate was 14.8 percent - about the same rate as in 1967.
- The federal government now operates 122 different anti-poverty programs.
 - There are 33 federal housing programs run by four different cabinet departments.
 - Six federal government cabinet departments and five independent agencies oversaw 27 cash or general assistance programs in 2011.
- Norway is the only nation that spends more per person than the U.S. spends on social welfare.
- In 2008 enrollment in Food Stamp program was below 30 million. In 2015, it is at 46.5 million.
- There is a large amount of waste and error in the current system
 - Medicaid made \$14.4 billion improper payments in 2013.
 - The Government Accountability Office reports that despite great progress, “the amount of SNAP (food stamps) benefits paid in error is substantial, totaling about \$2.2 billion in 2009,” according to FreedomWorks.
 - Additionally, a report compiled by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) stated that, “the 18 food assistance programs show signs of program overlap, which can create unnecessary work and lead to inefficient use of resources.”
 - In 2014 the Social Security Administration improperly paid \$5.1 billion in Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Department of Labor improperly paid \$5.6 billion in Unemployment Insurance; IRS improperly paid an estimated \$17.7 billion in Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) payments.
- Administrative costs for SNAP equals about \$5.5 billion per year, or about 10 percent of the value of food stamps distributed

Solutions for reform:

- 1 – Look for solutions in the community.**
- 2 – Education reform.**
- 3 – School Choice.**
- 4 – Criminal Justice reform.**
- 5 – Job Training.**
- 6 – Regulatory Reform.** Dodd Frank has hurt entrepreneurs by limiting access to loans needed to create or expand a business.
- 7 – Tax Reform for Job Creation.**
- 8 – Evidence-Based Policy Making:** Another step in making government work better for people is analyzing whether or not programs are actually effective.