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Presidential candidates claim credit for welfare reform, but what did the reforms really accomplish?

In recent campaign speeches and debates, presidential candidates Newt Gingrich and Rick Santorum have both claimed credit for welfare reform and promised additional reforms if elected. And over the last 15 years, Democrats and Republicans alike have all proclaimed welfare reform to be a bipartisan success. But what really happened with welfare reform and what exactly are these political leaders basing their claims on?

“Contrary to the political rhetoric from both political parties, welfare reform was not a success,” explained Jack Frech, director of Athens County Job and Family Services. “Any objective evaluation of the state of poor families in America today will conclusively show that these families are worse off now than they were in 1996, when welfare reform was put into place.”

The 1996 reforms made welfare a block grant program that has had its funding kept at approximately \$17 billion over the last 15 years.

“How many other federal programs are expected to provide adequate services on the same budget that was in place 15 years ago? This has been the most intentionally harmful public policy for families and children in recent memory,” Frech said. “How can anyone say that welfare reform has been a success when there are 7.3 million children living at less than half of the Federal Poverty Level?”

Athens County Job and Family Services has compiled a report looking at the true impact of welfare reform in America. The report looks at the stated goals of the reforms and if these goals have been met. The report also examines the impact that the reforms have made on children and families.

The report is attached with this e-mail, and has also been posted at jfs.athenscountygovernment.com