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Welfare Reform Daily Talking Points
Tuesday, June 6, 1995

A RACE TO INDEPENDENCE

Today, the National Governors' Association is sponsoring a National Summit on Young Children. The summit will bring together a bipartisan group of governors, mayors, and state and local officials to discuss the needs of America's children. President Clinton will also address the group today -- focusing on the importance of creating real welfare reform that helps children grow into independent, productive adults. Here are the points he'll make:

o **Batting 1,000 on work.** Real welfare reform is first and foremost about helping parents go to work -- and the system must provide work-based incentives for states, caseworkers, and welfare recipients themselves. As President Clinton says today, while the Senate Finance bill is a step in the right direction from the House bill, it still misses the mark. According to the Congressional Budget Office, only six out of the 50 states would be able to meet the bill's work requirements -- a 120 batting average which wouldn't even cut it in the minor leagues. That's not ending welfare as we know it -- that's politics as usual.

o **Resources to get the job done.** As President Clinton has repeatedly said, we won't have welfare reform or state flexibility if Congress just gives states more burdens and fewer resources. To be credible, the President says, welfare reform legislation must have real work requirements, backed up with real resources for education, training, and job placement to help people get jobs and keep them. According to the CBO, it would cost states $10 billion a year by the year 2000 to meet the requirements in the Senate bill -- and yet the bill expects them to do this with less money than they have now. Unfunded mandates have no place in real welfare reform legislation.

o **True state flexibility.** As the President says today, states have become the real laboratories of reform in this country -- especially in the area of children and families. We've already given 29 states the flexibility to reform welfare at the local level -- granting more waivers than both of the previous two administrations combined. In Vermont and Wisconsin, Governors Dean and Thompson are using their waivers to require and reward work. And in Ohio, Governor Voinovich is moving people to work by using money now spent on AFDC and food stamp benefits to subsidize private sector jobs. That's real welfare reform.

o **A race to independence.** While we must give states more flexibility in welfare reform, we must also make sure that they continue to fulfill their responsibilities. The Senate bill contains no incentives or requirements for states to maintain their own funding for cash assistance, child care, and supports for work. As the President says today, state should be rewarded for getting people to work or prepare for work -- not for cutting people from the rolls. Welfare reform should not be a race to the bottom -- it should be a race to independence. The President has challenged Congress to send him a real welfare reform bill by July 4th -- Independence Day -- to give every state a chance to succeed in moving people from welfare to work.

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Welfare Reform Daily Talking Points
Monday, June 5, 1995

THE CALL FOR REAL WELFARE REFORM

Since the Senate Finance Committee voted on welfare reform legislation last month, editorial boards from across the country have offered their views of what real welfare reform means -- and how the Finance bill falls short. As these editorials explain, the requirements for welfare reform are simple: real work requirements, parental responsibility, and protections for states and individuals are essential to any plan that is truly about ending welfare as we know it.

o **Real work requirements.** Real welfare reform is first and foremost about work -- and the system must provide work-based incentives for states, caseworkers, and welfare recipients themselves. States must have the necessary resources for child care, training, and work in order to get the job done. As the *Austin-American Statesman* writes, "increasing state control of welfare can be beneficial, but certainly not without adequate funding to help people become self-sufficient." And the Springfield *News-Leader* notes that "for people to get off welfare they must acquire skills to make them employable; we must remove the disincentives that in some instances lower their standards of living when they get jobs; and there must be consequences for not trying to become employed."

o **Requiring parental responsibility.** Child support enforcement is a crucial part of welfare reform, because it sends a strong signal to young people about the responsibility of both parents to the children they bring into the world. If we're going to demand responsibility of mothers, we should demand responsibility of fathers too. The South Carolina *State* writes that "absolutely no excuses should be accepted from men who don't accept responsibility for the children they father." The *State* adds that license revocation is the way to go, and "President Clinton wants federal legislation to revoke professional, recreation, commercial, and driving licenses of parents" who fail to pay support.

o **Children should not be punished for their parents' mistakes.** True reform should make it easier for poor children to grow into productive adults -- not harder. Teenage parents should not be denied cash assistance -- instead, help should be conditioned on their staying at school, living at home, and identifying their child's father. Needy children should be assured basic protections wherever they live. As the *San Jose Mercury News* wrote last week, "assuring support for poor children requires widespread school breakfasts and clinics, parenting programs for teen moms, and so on."

o **State flexibility.** Any legislation must enable states to succeed in moving people from welfare to work and support working families and children who need temporary help. The *San Jose Mercury News* writes that fixed-sum block grants "will make it harder for states to reduce child poverty and welfare dependence. Welfare spending wouldn't keep up with inflation ... Little, if anything, will be left for programs that help adults move from welfare to work." And the *Austin-American Statesman* adds that the "GOP funding formula is based on current welfare dollars going to the states. If the number of people seeking welfare increases in a given budget year, there would be no money to accommodate the new clients. In fast-growing states such as California, Florida, and Texas, this could be disastrous."

Welfare Reform Daily Talking Points
Friday, June 2, 1995

CUTTING NUTRITION PROGRAMS ISN'T WELFARE REFORM

Today, the Food Research and Action Center holds a press briefing on current congressional proposals affecting the Food Stamp program. While the House has already approved deep cuts in Food Stamps, some in the Senate are contemplating going even further -- by eliminating the program and sending it in a fixed block grant to the states. The Clinton Administration has proposed improvements in the Food Stamp program to better serve to better serve American children and families, ensure that benefits are issued and used properly, and give states more flexibility in operating the program. But we are opposed to block granting federal nutrition programs. These programs provide an important foundation for children to grow on. Children's nutrition and health must be protected -- not jeopardized -- under welfare reform.

- **Kids should not go hungry.** The Clinton Administration believes that only a national system of nutrition programs can establish and meet nutrition standards that respond to economic changes and ensure that children's health will be protected. As Secretary Glickman said before the Senate Agriculture Committee last month, "The health of children, working families, and the elderly should not be jeopardized by eliminating the national nutrition and food safety net. We cannot support the creation of a system that does not respond to economic changes, reduces food spending and harms the economy. For these reasons, the Administration is strongly opposed to block grants and such deep cuts for the Food Stamps and Child Nutrition programs."

- **Cuts in the name of reform.** Under the House bill, funding for child nutrition programs would be cut by $6.6 billion over five years. According to the Children's Defense Fund, these cuts would deprive over 2 million school children of free meals. In addition, the House bill would create wide variations in nutrition standards across states, without any accountability mechanisms to ensure that those standards would be met. Children's health would suffer if states shifted resources away from nutrition programs to meet budget shortfalls.

- **Nutrition programs work.** A survey released in April by the National Association of WIC Directors shows that a majority of Americans support the WIC program, with more than half of those polled stating that <u>more</u> federal money should be spent on nutrition for poor pregnant women and children. WIC, Food Stamps, School Lunches, and other federal nutrition programs get food to people who need it. And they've produced significant, measurable results in improving the health and nutrition of the people they serve. As Secretary Glickman said before the Senate, "Since the nationwide expansion of the Food Stamp program and the introduction of WIC, our children are healthier."

- **A glimmer of hope.** Majority Leader Dole is on record in support of a national commitment to child nutrition: "The nutrition area is one that does not easily lend itself to state responsibility ... It is appropriate that the federal government retain primary responsibility for nutrition programs in order to guarantee some standardization of benefits ... This Senator believes that child nutrition should remain a national priority," he said at a 1982 hearing. We'll continue to work with members of both parties to fix what's broken, rather than what's not.

Welfare Reform Daily Talking Points
Thursday, June 1, 1995

WHAT REAL WELFARE REFORM MEANS

From the start, the Clinton Administration has laid out our requirements for real welfare reform. In order to end welfare as we know it, we must have real, fundamental change that helps move people from welfare to work, encourages responsible behavior, and sends a strong message to the next generation that people should not have children until they are ready to care for them. Here's what real welfare reform means:

- **Real work requirements.** Real welfare reform is first and foremost about work -- and the system must provide work-based incentives for states, caseworkers, and welfare recipients themselves. States must have the necessary resources for child care, training, and work in order to get the job done. State bureaucracies should be rewarded for getting people to work or prepare for work -- not for cutting people from the rolls. Recipients must sign personal responsibility agreements, and move toward work and self-sufficiency from the very first day. Time limits must make clear to welfare recipients and caseworkers that welfare is a transitional system, not a way of life.

- **Requiring parental responsibility.** Child support enforcement is a crucial part of welfare reform, because it sends a strong signal to young people about the responsibility of both parents to the children they bring into the world. If we're going to demand responsibility of mothers, we should demand responsibility of fathers too. That means welfare reform should include measures designed to identify the father in every case; find delinquent parents who move from job to job or state to state to avoid paying child support; speed up payments; and invoke tough penalties, like drivers' license revocation, for nonpayment.

- **Children should not be punished for their parents' mistakes.** True reform should make it easier for poor children to grow into productive adults -- not harder. Teenage parents should not be denied cash assistance -- instead, help should be conditioned on their staying at school, living at home, and identifying their child's father. Needy children should be assured basic protections wherever they live. School lunches, Food Stamps, and assistance to abused, disabled and neglected children should not be slashed under the guise of "welfare reform."

- **States must have flexibility -- and resources -- to get the job done.** The federal-state partnership should be retained, because we won't have welfare reform or state flexibility if Congress just gives states more burdens and fewer resources. Any legislation must enable states to succeed in moving people from welfare to work and support working families and children who need temporary help. States should be rewarded for moving people from welfare to work, and protected in the event of population growth, an economic downturn, a natural disaster, or another unpredictable emergency.

- **A long way to go.** As Secretary Shalala stated last week, the Administration is pleased that the Senate Finance legislation "eliminates some of the extreme and punitive provisions in the bill passed by the House of Representatives. But it still has a long way to go on what should be the centerpiece of real reform: helping people earn a paycheck, not a welfare check ... Our requirements for welfare reform are clear. We want a bill that is serious about moving people from welfare rolls to payrolls, and we remain committed to working with Congress in a bipartisan way to achieve that goal."

Welfare Reform Daily Talking Points
Thursday, May 25, 1995

REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS SAY STATES WILL BE STRAPPED

Today, HHS releases an analysis of the state impacts under the Senate Finance Committee's welfare proposal. While the bill would reduce federal support for all states by **$31 billion** overall, the impact on individual states will be dramatic. As the *Washington Post* reports today, governors from both parties have spoken out against the funding formula of the Packwood proposal -- they support an amendment that would create a grant, rather than a loan fund, for states in the event of high population growth, a recession, or an unpredictable emergency. As the *Post* notes, Republican Governors "Whitman and Voinovich have argued strongly that financially strapped states should not be forced to borrow funds and that instead, the federal government should set up a system of grants."

o **Strapping states.** As Secretary Shalala wrote yesterday to Finance Committee members, "The Administration is concerned that the fixed block grant in the proposed legislation makes inadequate allowances for potential growth in the need for cash assistance because of economic downturn, population growth or unpredictable emergencies. By failing to provide for the changing needs of states, it poses a danger that many growing or economically distressed states will not be able to meet the needs of their people, and will be unable to provide the child care and supports necessary to move recipients into work."

o **Ohio objects.** Ohio would lose more than **$1 billion in federal funding over five years** under the Senate Finance proposal. As Governor Voinovich wrote in a recent letter to Senator Packwood, the committee "bill does not provide sufficient protections for states in the event of an economic downturn. The federal-state partnership should not end when economic caseloads worsen and caseloads increase." Voinovich adds that under a grant fund, "**states** could receive matching funds for an economic downturn, to provide additional services, such as day care or job training to meet the bill's work requirements, or to meet increased demand caused by population growth."

o **New Jersey in need.** Under the Packwood proposal, New Jersey would lose **$941 million over five years** -- making it harder, not easier for the state to move people from welfare to work. Governor Whitman also wrote to Senator Packwood that the bill's rainy day loan fund is "inadequate" for states to get the job done: "**It** is unrealistic, however, to think that states facing an economic downturn will be able to <u>borrow</u> money from the federal government and pay loan funds back <u>with interest</u>."

o **State flexibility -- not cost shifting.** As Secretary Shalala wrote yesterday, "The Chairman's mark undercuts the ability of states to move recipients from welfare to work by reducing the funding available for work programs and child care. It provides nothing to reward states in movement to work. Real welfare reform means giving states the incentives and resources to move people from welfare to work ... We will not achieve real welfare reform or state flexibility if Congress simply gives states more burdens and less money and fails to make work and responsibility the law of the land."

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Welfare Reform Daily Talking Points
Tuesday, July 11, 1995

"DO SOMETHING"

Today, *Washington Post* columnist Mary McGrory writes on the status of welfare reform in the Senate. She notes that Senate Majority Leader Dole and House Majority Leader Dick Armey have said the chances for passing welfare reform this year are slim. Dole "wouldn't bet the farm" on it. What's stalling reform? As McGrory and others have recently noted, senators are divided over the formula used to allocate funds to states under proposed block grants. President Clinton has called on Congress to deliver real welfare reform legislation this year -- and that means making sure that each state has the funding it needs to move people from welfare to work.

o **Fair funding for states.** "If the debate over ideological differences has been volatile and rhetorical, the *Washington Post* said last month, "the fight over funding formulas has been more like trench warfare." Senators continue to disagree over the allocation of funds under the House and Senate bills' block grant approach. As Mary McGrory notes today, a bipartisan group of 30 senators recently wrote to Senator Packwood, asserting that their states "would be penalized if the House version were to prevail." The senators wrote that freezing current allocations would "penalize high-growth states and have devastating results over a five-year period."

o **Protections for states.** As Mary McGrory notes, many senators are now realizing that the House bill's funding formula would leave them short. McGrory says that Senators Phil Gramm of Texas and Al D'Amato of New York represent states that would face different dangers under the funding formula: "Gramm voicing Sun Belt states' concern over high population growth that would not be covered by allocations that would be frozen for five years, and D'Amato speaking for a northern state with generous benefits that would be left no cushion for recession."

o **"Work First" will get the job done.** In order to end welfare as we know it, we need real work requirements backed up with the resources states need to get the job done. Our "Work First" proposal would give states the resources they need to move people into the work force and support working families and children who need temporary help. Under "Work First," states would be rewarded for moving people from welfare to work, and protected in the event of population growth, an economic downturn, a natural disaster, or another unpredictable emergency.

o **Moving ahead with reform.** Republican Senator John Chafee, McGrory writes today, recognizes that the American people want Congress to "do something about welfare." As President Clinton said in Saturday's radio address, "Republicans and Democrats alike know what's needed to get this job done. A majority of senators in both parties agree with me that welfare reform must require everyone who can work to go to work. We agree on the need for the toughest possible child support enforcement. And we agree that no one who can work should be able to stay on welfare forever. So, we are close. Congress could put a bill on my desk -- a good bill -- within the next few weeks. After a generation of debate, we have a chance -- finally -- to do what's right for the taxpayers who pay for a failed welfare system, and for the people who are trapped by it."

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Welfare Reform Daily Talking Points
Monday, June 12, 1995

SECRETARY SHALALA SAYS "CHILD CARE COUNTS"

Today, Secretary Shalala will speak at the Department of Labor's "Working Women Count" child care forum in Ohio. As the *New York Times* reported last week, these forums are part of the Clinton Administration's effort to increase awareness of the need for quality child care for working families as well as single mothers making the transition from welfare to work. As the Administration has said from the start, child care is essential to moving recipients into permanent jobs -- and to keeping low-income women in the workforce.

o **The Clinton commitment.** As Secretary Shalala wrote to senators last month, "The Administration supports an approach to child care that genuinely supports work for parents, and safety and healthy development for children. Such an approach must guarantee child care for families moving towards self-sufficiency, and must expand child care opportunities for working families who want to avoid welfare dependency. We believe that any serious proposal must ensure quality choices for parents and provide for continuity of services for children and families."

o **Making work possible.** Real welfare reform is first and foremost about work -- and the system must provide work-based incentives for states, caseworkers, and welfare recipients themselves. Despite the critical link between child care and work, the House bill would cut federal assistance for child care by **$1.6 billion over the next five years.** As the Secretary says today, Ohio alone would lose **$88 million** in child care funding over five years. This means that in the year 2000, more than **16,000 children in Ohio** would be left home alone. And similar effects are possible in the Packwood bill, which undercuts state efforts by reducing the funding available for both work programs and child care.

o **Safe and reliable care.** A report last week from the National Research Council presents evidence that "the successful completion of job training is contingent on child care that is reliable and of acceptable quality and that matches parents' scheduling needs, [and] highlights the pivotal role that child care plays in facilitating work effort among families in poverty." This research supports other recent findings that state the obvious: adequate child care is essential to helping people move into the workforce -- and stay there.

o **Common sense.** Senator Packwood himself has acknowledged that "single parents must have day care in order to work. Day care costs money. A family is on welfare because it doesn't have money. It can be a vicious downward spiral." As the President said last week to the NGA, "we have to require people who can work to go to work, and make sure that they have the child care to do it so that they don't have to hurt their children to do the right thing as citizens. It defies common sense to insist that people go to work when they have very young children if doing so will actually cost them money."