



Back Home Share: E-mail Print Comment Digg del.icio.us

Adams: Success, of a fashion, with welfare reform

Photos



Pam Adams

By **PAM ADAMS**
of the Journal Star
Posted Dec 17, 2008 @ 08:10 PM

Here's a little news from Springfield that may have been overlooked.

Back in October, the Blagojevich administration announced a 9 percent increase in the monthly checks that welfare recipients receive from the state.

The governor and the General Assembly did a "good thing," says Margaret Stapleton of the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law in Chicago, by approving the increase in the state budget. "This is a great day for Illinois," Carol Adams, director of the Illinois Department of Human Services, said at the time.

So here's what passes as a good thing and a great day for people who are very poor.

The increase was the first in six years for Illinois families in the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF, program. The increase was included in the November checks, just in time for the holidays. The increase was retroactive back to July, meaning each family receiving cash assistance in the TANF program also received a lump sum payment for July through October.

With the increase, a family of four now receives about \$470 a month. That's \$5,640 a year. That's still far below \$11,000, the annual amount a family of four must earn less than to be defined, under federal guidelines, as living

in extreme poverty. But that's still more than the average monthly grant - \$241.

That's welfare reform, and Illinois' version is considered better than most states. But nobody's paying much attention to the original welfare these days. Everybody's gagging on corporate welfare.

"There's no doubt in my mind, welfare reform in Illinois was a success," says Dan Lewis, a Northwestern University professor who led a multi-year study on welfare reform's impact on families in nine counties, including Peoria, Tazewell, Woodford, Knox, Stark and Marshall counties.

"Almost everybody gets off welfare and their income doubles," Lewis says.

Illinois' approach to welfare reform was moderate compared to other states. Here, officials bundled health care, child care and job training around people leaving welfare to work. Family incomes, on average, grew from \$7,000 a year to \$14,000 a year. Two-thirds of the approximately 1,000 families surveyed were still living below the poverty line in 2004 when the study ended.

"But in four years, they had moved from extreme poverty to less extreme poverty," Lewis says.



pjstar.com Specials Blogs

- New! Ask the Pro!
- New! Mystique
- Holiday Shopping Videos
- Reader's Choice Award Winners!
- NEW Style and Substance Magazine
- HomeSite 2008
- Order your Peoria Memories book
- Careers 2008 - Virtual Job Fair
- 3B Freebie

- All Blogs
- The Buzz
- Andy Kravetz: inFormation
- Gary Panetta: Bach and Lemon Shakeups
- Jennifer Towery: Change of Heart
- Steve Stein: Stein Time
- Kevin Capie: Check Swings
- Dave Eminian: Cleve's World
- Jeff Lampe: Scattershooting
- Bill Liesse: The Sports Editor
- Mike Nadel: The Baldest Truth
- Dave Reynolds: Reynolds Rap
- Greg Stewart: From the Rough
- Kirk Wessler: Captain's Blog
- Preps Plus
- The Snap: High school football

Yellow Pages

Find whatever you're looking for with **Totally Local Yellow Pages**

Find...

Peoria, IL

Search provided by Premier Guide

Popular Searches Featured Business

Most Popular Stories

- Caterpillar to lay off 814

This is what passes as success for people who are extremely poor.

The 9 percent TANF increase affects about 27,000 households, a total of 62,000 adults and children. Advocates estimate that almost 700,000 Illinoisans live in extreme poverty, which highlights just how drastically welfare rolls have dropped since welfare reform took effect in 1996.

For Lewis, the drastically reduced numbers on Illinois' welfare rolls represent an unintended consequence of welfare reform's successes.

"The notion that welfare was an African-American problem, that African-Americans were getting something for nothing? That's gone now because hardly anybody's on welfare," Lewis says. "Dividing people along racial lines is not as easy as it was to do 15 years ago, because everybody's in the same boat."

He calls that an "unintended plus" of welfare reform.

"When unemployment rates start to go up, as they're doing now, competition for fewer jobs hurts people who have the poorest work records, the lowest education levels, the most problems taking care of their children. But that's the negative side."

Here's the positive side.

"With everybody in the same boat, you can't blame poverty on the individual by saying they're too lazy or they're not looking."

Just when the real corporate welfare kings get rid of their private jets, we realize there never was a welfare queen. And, with what passes for success in the world of welfare reform, there's no chance there ever will be.

Pam Adams is a columnist with the Journal Star. Her e-mail address is padams@pjstar.com.

<p>Need Welfare? Get a \$250 grocery food debit card. Free welfare resources & info</p>	<p>Stop Corruption Stop Blagojevich-Madigan Democrats. Let the People Vote.</p>
<p>Ads by Google</p>	

Comments (15)

Venari

4 days ago

[Report Abuse](#)

Will Obama do more for American's who need welfare than he apparently ever did for his half brother living in poverty in Africa or his aunt living illegally AND on welfare in America. Time will tell.

bornhere

4 days ago

[Report Abuse](#)

'With everybody in the same boat, you can't blame poverty on the individual by saying they're too lazy or they're not looking.'Why can't you blame the individual? Who wouldn't rather stay home and wait for the check to come in the mail rather than have to get up, get dressed, feed yourself, drive clear to work and spend 8 or more hours actually doing something productive, and then go all the way back home only to have to repeat this again all week? Crystal clear choice.

Tony Miller

4 days ago

[Report Abuse](#)

Does the Journal Star have any columnists besides Pam Adams and Jerry Klein? There's quite a broad spectrum of opinions in the world today, almost none of which are represented by these two extremes.

Maybe I should apply. There's a scary thought.

RealWorld

4 days ago

[Report Abuse](#)

'The democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not.' - Thomas Jefferson

smilin Jack

4 days ago

[Report Abuse](#)

only 9%, sorry but we who get SS only got part of that amount and we worked for it. the welfare slugs should get nada, get off your lazy duffs and get some work. we are tired of supporting a lazy low lifes who drain our nation of its money. no wonder the mexicans come here, plenty of work, just have to sweat some, not our welfare kings and queens.

Balia Velvel

4 days ago

[Report Abuse](#)

'The notion that welfare was an African-American problem, that African-Americans were getting something for nothing? That's gone now because hardly anybody's on welfare,' Lewis says. 'Dividing people along racial lines is not as easy as it was to do 15 years ago, because everybody's in the same boat.'

So there was a time that blacks were getting something for nothing, guess those who were outspoken about it then weren't racist afterall.

cake77

4 days ago

[Report Abuse](#)

OK, so a family of 4 now receives a check for \$470 a month. That does put some one below the poverty line if that was the only assistance they were receiving.

But what is the dollar value of free housing, utilities, child care, health insurance, schooling, food stamp and every other entitlement?

When adding that all that together, are these people still living under the poverty line? Simply put, no. Of course, I wouldn't want to live like that, but some people do.

There is a reason why generation after generation stay on the dole. It's because it's easy. And the fact that any job they would be qualified to do would provide less than what is already being given to them. These people need to be doing something productive for the state if they are receiving public money.

towneil

3 days ago

[Report Abuse](#)

- ◊ Friday cancellations
- ◊ Eureka man drowns while removing snow
- ◊ Rain could leave half-inch sheet of ice
- ◊ Thursday cancellations
- ◊ Luciano: Trewyn teachers tire of unruliness
- ◊ Cat announces new plant in Texas
- ◊ Ryno up, over and out
- ◊ LaHood set to join Obama team
- ◊ Caterpillar plans temporary plant shutdowns, layoffs

Top Jobs

- Manufacturing
- Janitor
- Elderly Care
- Newspaper Delivery
- Clinical Documentation Spec
- Nurses, Social Service Asst., Floorcare
- Caregivers, Cook
- Welding Trainer / Coordinator
- Customer Service Rep
- Sales Manager
- More Top Ads



Recent Stories

- ◊ Forum: Fabulous Christmas program performances (12/22/08)
- ◊ Forum: Don't trash old appliances, repair or donate them instead (12/22/08)
- ◊ Our View: One step backward for U.S.-Iraq relations (12/22/08)
- ◊ Op-Ed: Time to end experiment with dollar coins (12/21/08)
- ◊ Forum: Gripes about Comcast? Tell members of City Council, too (12/21/08)
- ◊ Op-Ed: Is the worst still ahead? (12/21/08)
- ◊ Op-Ed: Look to inflation for a financial fix (12/21/08)
- ◊ Klein: Season's joys spread warmth through cold winter (12/21/08)
- ◊ Forum: Important to remember Dec. 7 (12/21/08)
- ◊ Will: Auto bailout shows Bush's attitude toward Congress (12/21/08)

[click to learn more](#)

see our latest phones, find a plan and spread some cheer

alltel
wireless

As I enjoy my seasonal lay off, I see plenty of jobs available. Are they glorious? No, but they pay alot better than the welfare check the state wants to give you. Take the job and work your way out of it. OR, we could try to tax people that make more money so that we can raise the amount of the welfare check. That would be alot easier.

kw498

3 days ago

[Report Abuse](#)

towneil, are you drawing unemployment during this little layoff? If so you are no better than the lazies mooching off the government, yes you pay into unemplment throughout the year, but so do I. And (hopefully) I will never see those dollars, they are the government's forever. I would like to see that study done in the city of Peoria. I think that we would see that most do not get off welfare they just keep re-applying when they get kicked off and they get it again, I also think that the racial lines would become evident. There are still good decent paying jobs out there for un-educated, un-skilled people... they are harder to find than they used to be, but they are there.

nana_R

3 days ago

[Report Abuse](#)

ditto, cage77!

My two daughters with one child each, would be better off to collect welfare, get free rent, food, etc. Instead, they choose to work 2 jobs, which is what it takes for them to pay the bills. Neither can even get food stamps because they make too much at \$9 hr. Instead of giving handouts to lazy people, welfare should benefit those who at least try. I live in a 'poor' neighborhood, and see my welfare-collecting neighbors, with 3, 4, 5 children, wearing expensive clothing, shoes, and of course, talking on a cell phone. If they are so poor, how the heck do they afford these items? I just don't get it.

I get so sick of Pam Adamsthe PJStar has no excuse for allowing her to spew her radical 'views'. The least they could do is hire an additional person with a viewpoint to counteract this type of continual nonsense and bigotry.

bornhere

3 days ago

[Report Abuse](#)

You're not suggesting Pam is racist are you? Why is she the only one with a photo accompanying her articles?

sonny barger

3 days ago

[Report Abuse](#)

Nothing like bear-baiting local Freepers.

RealWorld

3 days ago

[Report Abuse](#)

Pam Adams.... I thought his name was Jeff

towneil

3 days ago

[Report Abuse](#)

kw 498, actually I am on unemployment but not welfare assistance. I am taking the food stamps though because my family gets about \$800 a month on that. Too many hoops to jump thru for the assistance part but hey atleast we can eat good. I am white in case it matters to you. I pay into the tax system every year about \$12000 to Uncle Sam. Yes my seasonal job pays that good but I am horrible with money. You see, this is what welfare does to you, it so stinking easy to get FREE stuff. So go on Obama, stick it to the rich people, tax more business, give me more of that free stuff.

towneil

3 days ago

[Report Abuse](#)

There certainly needs to be welfare reform. Like actually earning the check versus going to mailbox and getting it. I agree that a family that is trying to get it done should get more help then the ones who dont. But until the rules change, if I need help then I get it.

Login or register to post a comment:

Login

Username:

Password:

[Forgot password](#)

Register

Email:

First Name:

Last Name:

I agree to the [terms of use](#)

I am over 13 years of age

NOTE: Your inbox must accept emails from "no-reply@gatehousemedia.com"



Site Map: [Home](#) | [News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Preps](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Features](#) | [Business](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Photos](#) | [Blogs](#) | [Multimedia](#) |

[pjstar.com](#) | Peoria, IL

[Contact Us](#) | [Subscriber Services](#) | [Peoria Yellow Pages](#)

Copyright © 2008 GateHouse Media, Inc. Some Rights Reserved.

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#)

Original content available for non-commercial use

under a Creative Commons license,

except where noted.



[Advertiser profiles](#) | [Yellow Pages by Premier Guide](#) |

WEB BROWSING REDEFINED FIREFOX 3