

SENATOR STEVE DAINES (MT)

JOBS AND OPPORTUNITY WITH BENEFITS AND SERVICES FOR SUCCESS ACT

JOBS Act - One Page Summary

Background and need for legislation: The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program provides grants to states for a wide range of benefits and services that seek to address the effects of and root causes of child poverty and economic disadvantage. While the historic bipartisan TANF reforms of a generation ago has helped families move into jobs and toward self-sufficiency, many states have exploited loopholes to circumvent work requirements while diverting TANF funds for other purposes. The program's work requirements are badly broken and need to be modernized.

Bill summary: Modeled after a bill passed out of the House Ways and Means Committee (H.R. 5861), this legislation would reauthorize TANF funding and implement reforms to help recipients find work. The reforms would require states to develop individualized plans for employment and ensure federal and state funds are spent on employment-oriented purposes. It will help close the jobs gap in our country by empowering low-income Americans to find and maintain a job.

Specifically, this legislation would:

- Extend TANF, tribal TANF, and healthy marriage promotion and responsible fatherhood grants through 2023.
- Help address barriers to work by increasing child care entitlement funding to \$3.5 billion annually and enabling those struggling with substance abuse, such as methamphetamine use, an additional three months to participate in substance abuse or mental health treatment if necessary to prepare the work-eligible individual for employment while still receiving benefits.
- Retain a strong focus on work requirements by requiring all work-eligible individuals receiving assistance to participate in work activities for a minimum number of hours per month in exchange for benefits.
- Ensure no one is ignored or left on the sidelines by requiring states to engage with every work-eligible individual, beginning with an initial assessment that may account for education, skills, and work readiness, wherein the individual agrees to comply in exchange for benefits. Case managers will also be encouraged to set short, intermediate, and long-term actions for the individual to reach an employment goal.
- Target funds to truly needy families by limiting use of funds to families whose monthly income is below 200% of the federal poverty level.
- Promote accountability by measuring work outcomes to assess states' effectiveness in increasing employment, retention, and advancement among families.
- Maintain current law sanctioning individuals that fail to comply with activities in the individual opportunity plan without good cause, and sanction states for failure to comply with universal engagement requirements.
- Focus funds on core purposes by requiring at least 25% of each state's federal and maintenance of effort funds to be used for core activities that support work including direct assistance, case management, work supports and supportive services, work, wage subsidies, work activities and short-term aid.
- Beginning in FY 2020, phase out counting of third-party spending towards the state spending requirement.