

The Social Research Laboratory

Press Release - November 14, 1995

(NAU008.3, Fall 1995)
November 14, 1995
For Immediate Release
For More Information:
Fred Solop, (520) 523-3135

ARIZONANS SUPPORT GOALS OF STATE'S NEW WELFARE LAW

Arizonans overwhelmingly support the state's new welfare program, according to a recent survey conducted by the Social Research Laboratory at Northern Arizona University. People should be limited to two years of welfare funding and provided with incentives to go out and find a job, survey respondents said. These attitudes are similar to provisions within Arizona's new welfare program: EMPOWER.

The telephone survey was conducted with 527 Arizonans between October 24 and October 28th, just prior to EMPOWER going into effect on November 1. At that time, 89 percent of respondents favored a proposal requiring that people either work or volunteer full-time to receive supplemental welfare benefits. Two-thirds of respondents (63%) strongly favored this proposal. Three-quarters of Arizonans (79%) favored placing a two year limit on families that receive welfare benefits. More than half of all respondents (53%) strongly favored this idea. Republicans and self-identified conservative respondents were more likely than Democrats and liberals to support work requirements and a two-year limit on receiving welfare benefits. Women and men express somewhat equal levels of support for these measures. The survey carries a margin of error of +/- 4.4 percent.

Fred Solop, Director of the survey, said, "Arizona's politicians were working within the mainstream of public opinion when they devised the state's new welfare program. The EMPOWER program could well become a model of welfare reform in other states and at the federal level too."

NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD WELFARE AND WELFARE RECIPIENTS

The NAU survey found that Arizonans hold negative opinions of people receiving welfare benefits and of the welfare system. Eighty three percent of those polled believe the welfare system makes people work less than if a welfare system was not in place. Only 14 percent of Arizonans said this was not true. Three quarters of Arizonans--76 percent--believe people could get off welfare if they really wanted to. Only one-in-five (20%) disagreed with this idea.

A majority of respondents (52%) said that welfare discourages young women who get pregnant from marrying the father of the child. Thirty percent strongly agreed and 22 percent somewhat agreed with this statement. On the other hand, twenty percent of respondents strongly disagreed with this idea.

"Many Arizonans hold a negative image of the average welfare recipient. It is these negative images that are driving today's welfare reform efforts. Whether or not these images are, in fact, true is a different question," said Solop.

DON'T ABANDON THE SYSTEM ALTOGETHER

Despite their negative attitudes, Arizonans are not yet willing to abandon the welfare system altogether. Seventy-two percent of respondents agreed that welfare helps people get back on their feet when facing difficult situations such as unemployment, a divorce, or a death in the family.

Also, when asked if welfare helps people maintain healthy diets when they cannot afford to on their own, Arizonans had mixed opinions. Forty six percent agreed that welfare is helpful in this area while 51 percent disagreed.

WELFARE SERVICES ARE BEST HANDLED AT STATE LEVEL

The NAU survey asked respondents whether welfare services are best delivered by the federal or state government. By almost a three-to-one margin, Arizonans favored welfare services being delivered by the state government. A majority of respondents (54%) preferred state level delivery systems as compared to 20 percent of respondents who believe welfare is best delivered by the federal government. There is some uncertainty, however, as to whom within the government would do a better job of reforming the welfare system. Thirty-two percent of respondents said the Republicans are best able to reform the welfare system, 22 percent believe the Democrats would do a better job, but another 23 percent believe some other political party is best equipped to handle this task.

---end---