

GOVERNMENT REFORM PERSPECTIVE--WELFARE REFORM AND DEVOLUTION--SUMMARY OF REMARKS

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I do not believe that welfare reform is about making programs more cost efficient. I believe it is about making them more effective, responsive and locally controlled. Federal programs are usually one-size-fits-all. Devolution is an attempt to make them more responsive to the people who need them in the community.

The recent welfare reform legislation is a first step. But, we do not want a simple caseload reduction. We need welfare assistance to be a temporary situation for families—allowing them to move out of the cycle of poverty and not be trapped.

Block grants to states are neither efficient nor effective. Block grants move taxes from the communities to the federal government—where the federal government takes a cut—and then returns the tax dollars back to the communities without any measure of its effectiveness in the community.

If we want devolution to succeed, then we should grant states full control, not only over the structure, but also over the financing of the welfare programs. Let states design their own programs without interference from the federal government and then we can see what works. We need to be able to make assessments between different programs.