

Dependence on Government Highest in History



[Freedom In America Today](#)

Dear Friends,

This is a third look at this very dangerous state this nation finds itself in – one in five are completely dependent on the government!

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02/09/2012

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When John F. Kennedy was President, just over a quarter of federal spending went to fund programs paying for some 21.7 million Americans to be dependent on Uncle Sam. But as high as that spending and dependence on the federal government was then, it has exploded today, with one in five Americans -- more than 67.3 million -- depending on Washington for assistance.

The Heritage Foundation's [2012 Index of Dependence on Government](#) shows an alarming trend under the Obama Administration of a level of dependence on our government that has never been seen before. Today, a full 70 percent of the federal government's budget goes to pay for housing, food, income, student aid, or other assistance, with recipients ranging from college students to retirees to welfare beneficiaries. Heritage's Patrick Tyrrell [writes](#) that other findings from the study show:

- Government dependency jumped 8.1 percent in the past year, with the most assistance going toward housing, health and welfare, and retirement.
- The federal government spent more taxpayer dollars than ever before in 2011 to subsidize Americans. The average individual who relies on Washington could receive benefits valued at \$32,748, more than the nation's average disposable personal income (\$32,446).
- At the same time, nearly half of the U.S. population (49.5 percent) does not pay any federal income taxes.
- In the next 25 years, more than 77 million baby boomers will retire. They will begin collecting checks from Social Security, drawing benefits from Medicare, and relying on Medicaid for long-term care.
- As of now, 70 percent of the federal government's budget goes to individual assistance programs, up dramatically in just the past few years. However, research shows that private, community, and charitable aid helps individuals rise from their difficulties with better success than federal government handouts. Plus, local and private aid is often more effectively distributed.

Representative Allen West (R-FL) [writes on The Foundry](#) that this disturbing trend does not bode well for our country and, in fact, will ultimately lead to an America where dependence -- not independence -- becomes the norm. And he says Washington must play a role in changing course while also encouraging charities and community groups to help lift up Americans who need support:

We in Congress need to do our part to aid the struggle for more personal responsibility. We need to reduce government spending levels so we are taking less from America's producers of economic growth. We need to take a long, hard look at these assistance programs,

eliminating duplicative efforts and directing aid first to the neediest of our population.

We also have to embolden charities, local groups, and private-sector initiatives to empower individuals through programs that require more "skin in the game." Far too often, these good Samaritans are pushed aside by government zeal to provide inferior and bureaucratized services. And finally, we need to reform entitlement programs like Medicare and Social Security so that they are viable for future generations without bankrupting our country.

With America about to witness the largest retirement of people in world history -- and with the number of "taxpayers" who pay no taxes only continuing to grow -- alarm bells should be ringing in Washington and across the country warning that the federal government is about to burst at the seams. The United States simply cannot afford to continue fostering a society where a growing number of people are dependent on the federal government and not themselves. What's more, if this trend continues, America will see increasing division between those who pay for programs that advance dependence, and those who unquestioningly accept--and expect--the assistance from those programs.

The Heritage Foundation's [*Saving the American Dream*](#) plan offers policy solutions to fix the debt, cut spending, reform entitlements, and restore prosperity, enabling the people of this country to thrive and succeed -- without depending on the government. And those kinds of reforms are desperately needed if America is to gain control over its \$15 trillion debt and its exploding entitlement system so that the people can produce for themselves, not for Washington.



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